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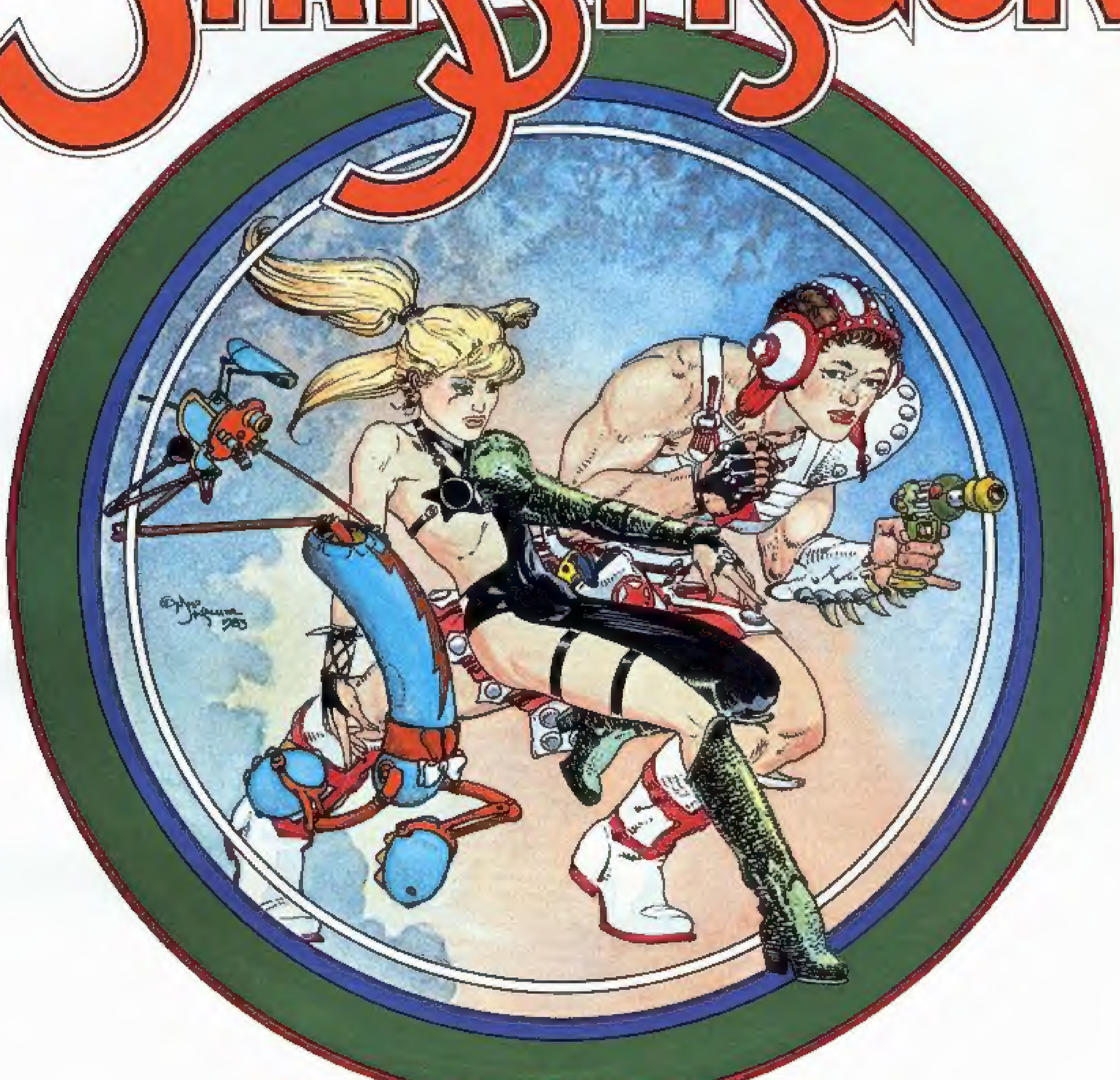

"THE LUCKLESS, THE ABANDONED AND FORSAKED"

BY ELAINE LEE AND Mˢᵗ KALUTA

A MARVEL GRAPHIC NOVEL™

STARSTRUCK™

THE LUCKLESS, THE ABANDONED, AND THE FORSAKED

by Elaine Lee and Michael Wm. Kaluta

Lettering
Todd Klein

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Editors
Archie Goodwin,
Margaret Clark,
Jo Duffy

•

Editor-in-Chief
James Shooter

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INTRODUCTION

by Elaine Lee

I REMEMBER IT LIKE IT WAS YESTERDAY....

but it was really October, 1979 when I met Michael Kaluta in a restaurant on 92nd and Broadway in N.Y.C. "Hi! You girls science fiction fans?" The big, bearded man shuffled uncomfortably, "I'm a fantasy artist." My sister, Susan leaned over and whispered in my ear, "Probably a cab driver who draws in his spare time." I don't know, the guy just looked too ill at ease to be throwing us a line. We exchanged numbers. I filed Michael on a 5x7 card that read: Kaluta/Artist/May be of help on next play.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE PLAY.

December 1979 in brief: I ran across a copy of THE STUDIO and was blown away by Kaluta's work. I sent him complimentary tickets for **The Contamination of The Kokomo Lounge,** a play about booze, Jesus, and chemical accidents that my sister and I had written and were acting in. He finally made it there closing night and was, he claims, likewise blown away. He stuck around to yak while we were striking the set. He got the bug and offered to do the poster (no charge!) for our company's next production, a very silly science-fiction comedy soon to be titled **Starstruck**! He gradually got suckered into doing the sets and costumes as well. So began our friendship and our journey through Anarchera.

LET THERE BE COMICS.

While we were working on the play, Michael and I would often find ourselves speculating on the possible pasts and futures of our characters. We decided we would like to do a book together. Our idea was to take several of the characters and, based on things that were revealed about their pasts in the play, recreate the incidents that changed them, made them the kind of creatures they were, set them on the road that would lead them to the confrontation around which the play was built. This is the book. These are the stories.

TO FRIENDS OF STARSTUCK IN ALL ITS FORMS:

Back in the summer of 1980, the major companies weren't doing graphic novels. Sal Quartucio (SQ Productions) kept us alive while we worked on **Starstruck** and was responsible for its publication in Europe and eventually in **Heavy Metal.** Our thanks, Sal. We would also like to thank Julie Simmons-Lynch for her support and the terrific article on the play (HM, May 83) and Kip Gould of Broadway Play Publishing for getting the play out there. A very contented type thanks goes to Jim Shooter and Archie Goodwin for taking a chance on us and giving us all that wonderful money for doing the thing we love most.

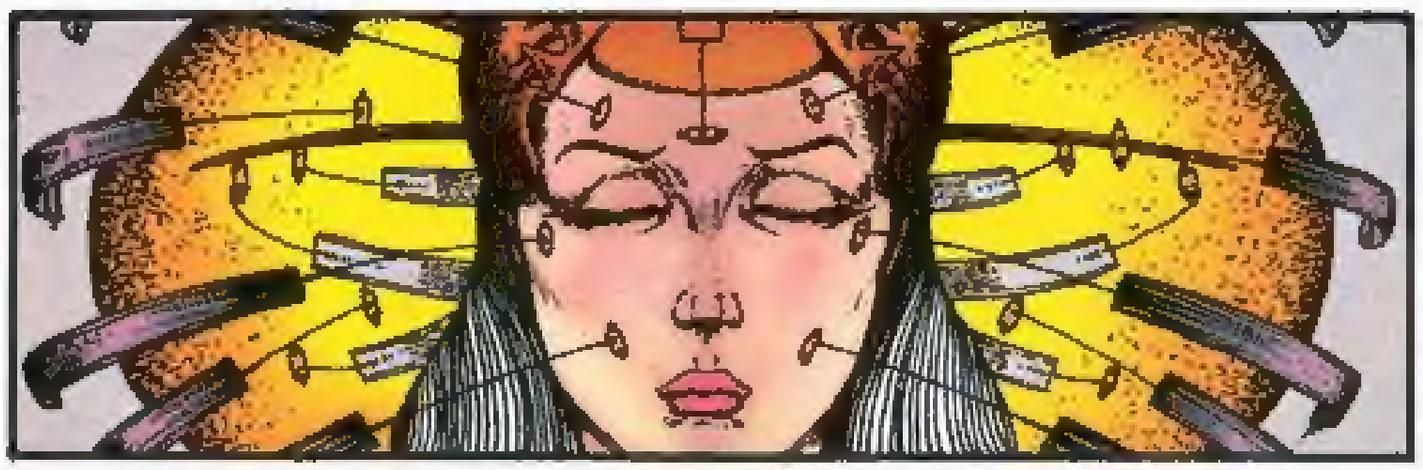
Our thanks also to composer Dwight Dixon, the man who brought sound to the **Starstruck** universe. If you think **Starstruck** looks good, you should have heard it! A tip of the hat to Charles Vess for helping us to realize Michael's designs for the play. Finally, our thanks to the actors who became the characters for us: Paul Ratkevitch (Kalif Bajar), Karen Bebb (Erotica Ann), Sandra Spurney (Verloona), Neal Ashmun (Rah El Rex), Kathy Gerber (Sister Bronwyn of the Cosmic Veil), and lastly and mostly my co-authors on the play Susan, my crazy sister who was, is, and always will be Brucilla and Dale Place, my ex-husband but all-time friend (Awww, gee whiz!) who breathed the soul into Dwannyun of Grivarr.

Dedicated to Robert Altman and Thomas Pynchon

PROLOGUE: *FROM THE WOMB OF HEAVEN...*

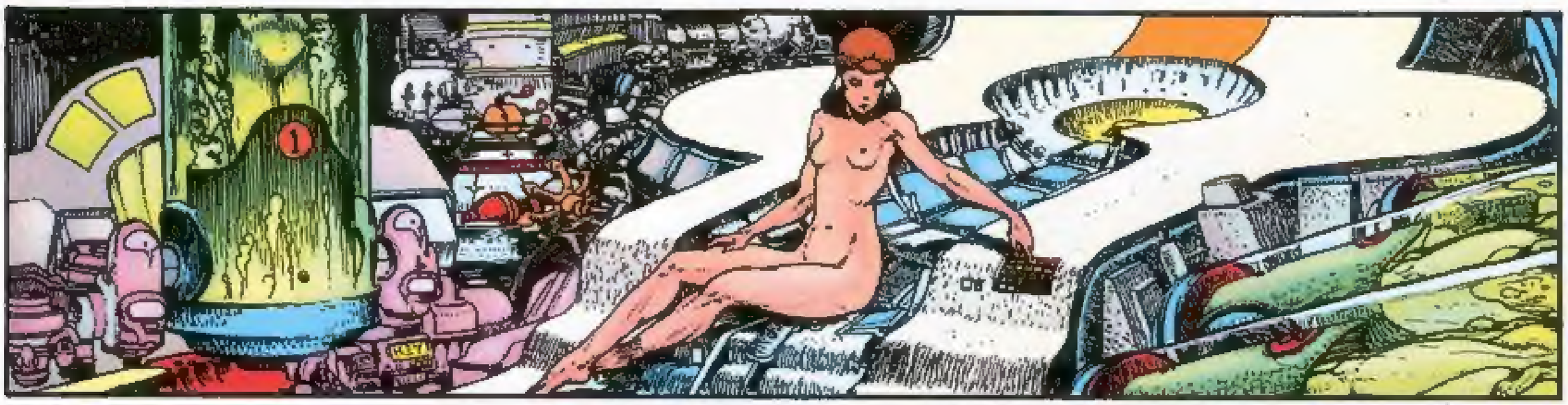
CYCLE 88
ANARCHERA

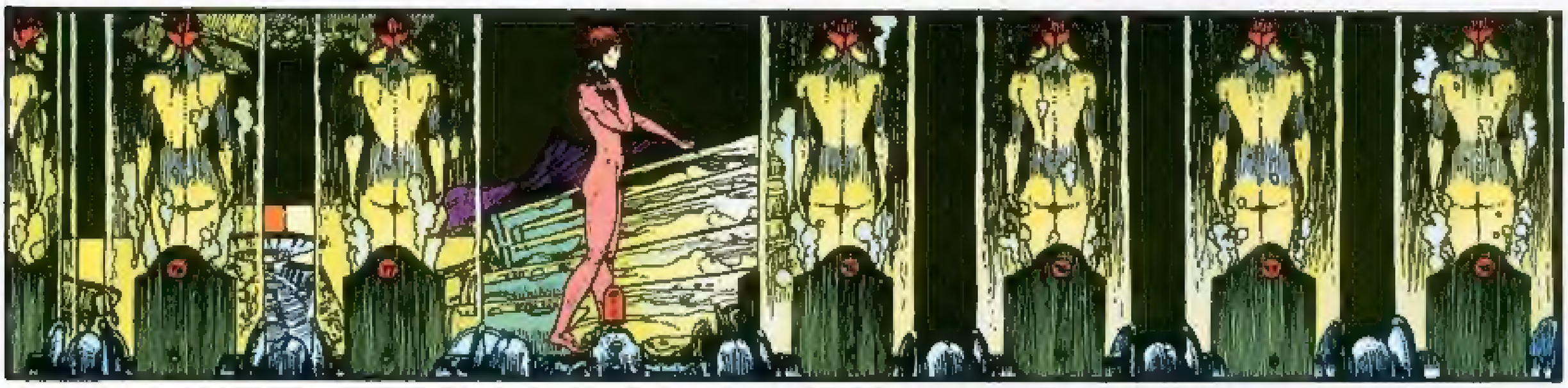
SOMEWHERE IN THE DEPTHS OF SPACE...

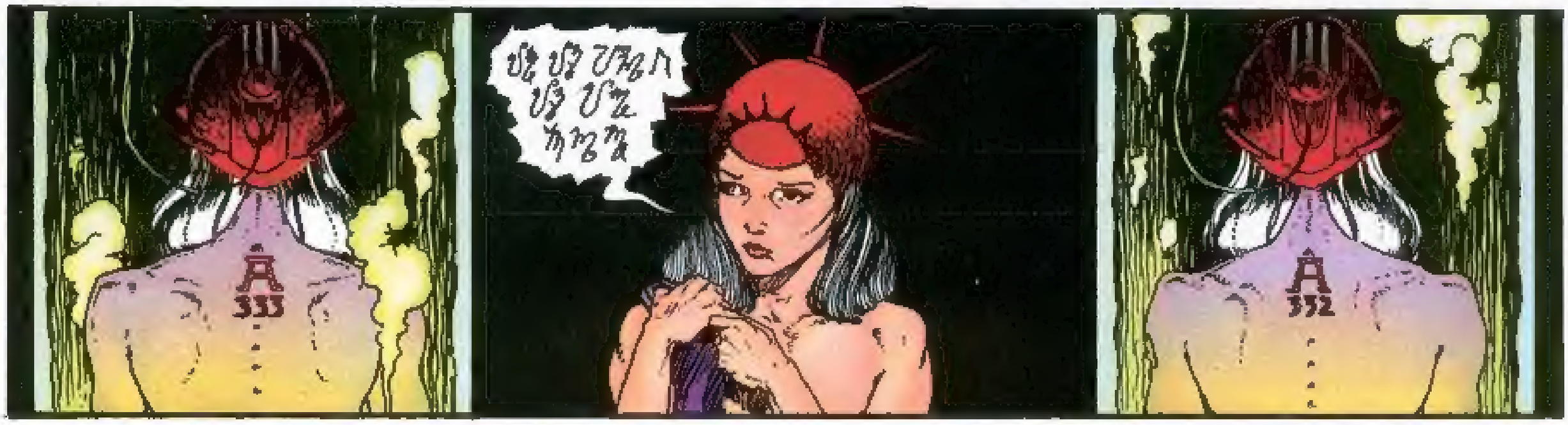


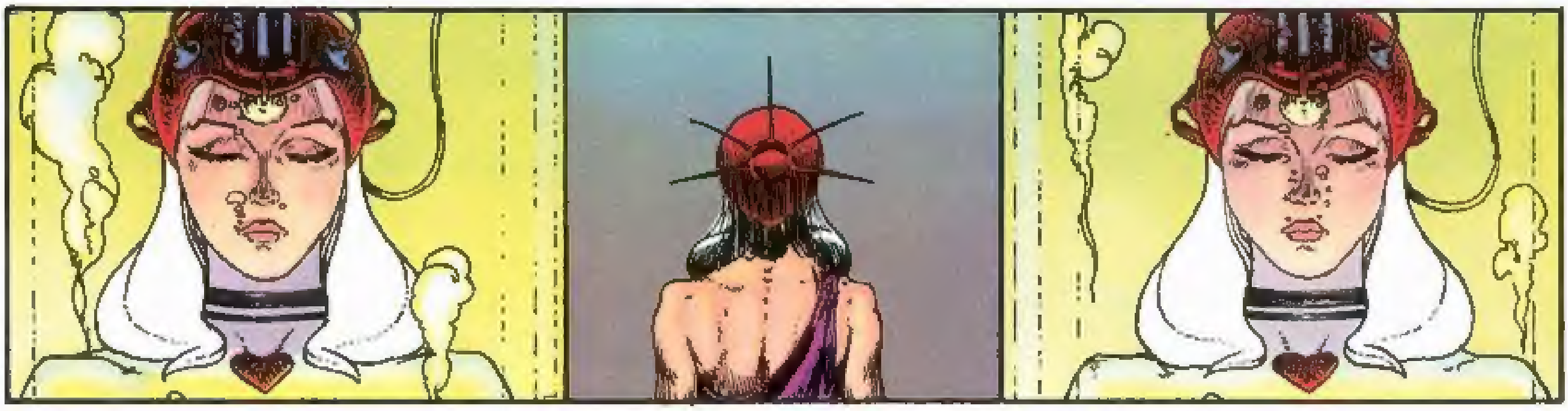
ILLUSION...
SOMETIMES CONFUSED WITH ALLUSION.

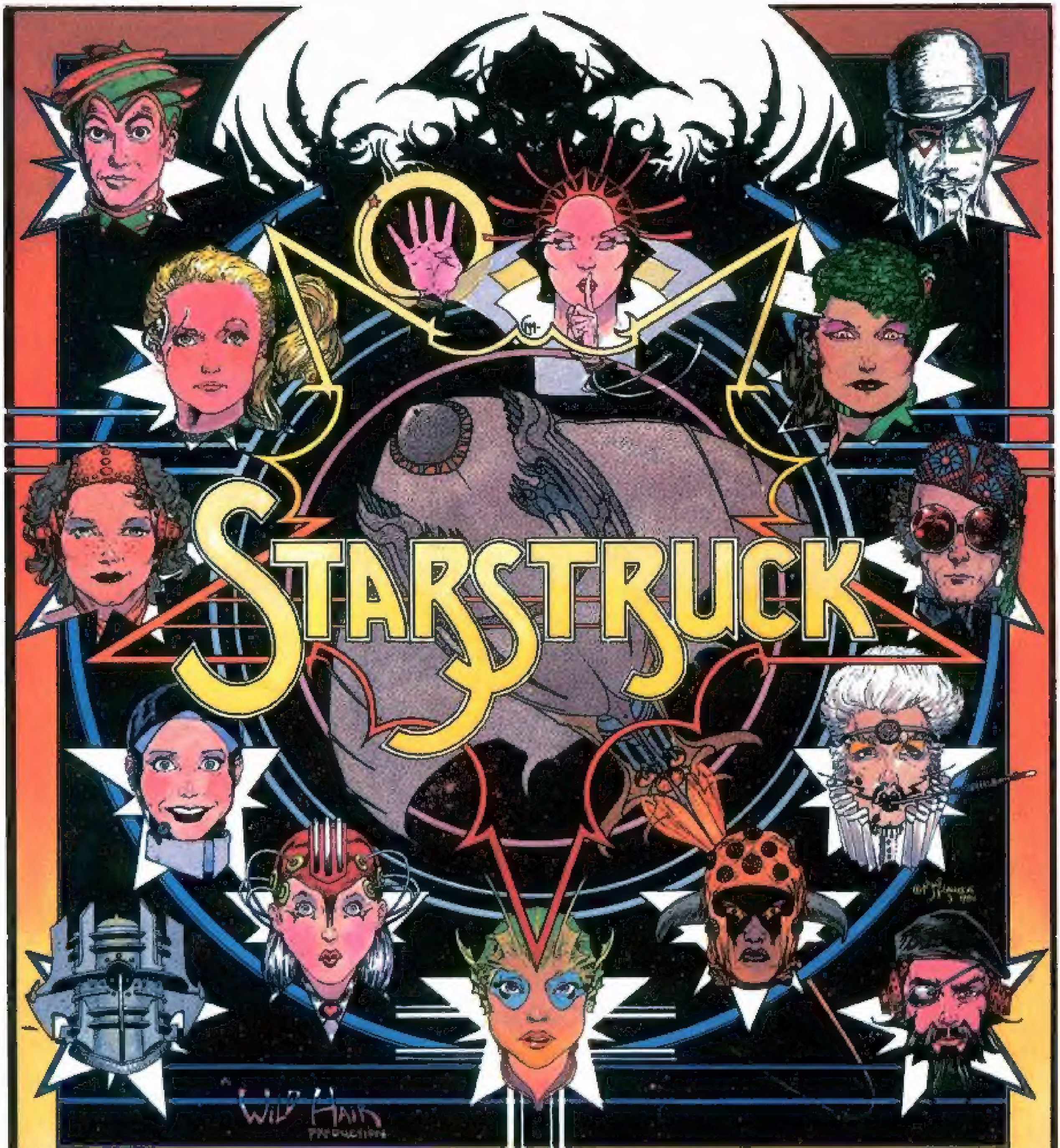
ILLUSION: AN UNREAL IMAGE OR MISLEADING APPEARANCE.
ALLUSION: AN INDIRECT REFERENCE.











BOOK ONE –

THE LUCKLESS, THE ABANDONED, AND FORSAKED

PLOT BY ELAINE LEE AND M.W. KALUTA
WRITTEN BY ELAINE LEE
ILLUSTRATED BY M.W. KALUTA

BASED UPON THE STAGE PLAY BY ELAINE LEE, NORFLEET LEE, AND DALE PLACE

"THEY LIE DORMANT IN SOME PEOPLE"

CYCLE 92
ANARCHERA

MID-OMEGA SESSION:
THE COURT ROOM OF
BARON
RODERIGO SEJANUS
VASCO D'GAMA
BAJAR

15:90

"ALL THINGS COME TO SHE WHO WAICS... AND WAICS...AND WAICS..."
--THIRD TENET OF THE COSMIC VEIL, CLOISTERED ORDER OF THE GODDESS UNCARING

o o o

"FUI! I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THAT I AM HAD THE MAIDENLIEST STAR IN THE FIRMAMENT TWINKLED ON MY BASCARDIZING!"
--EDMOND
KING LEAR
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

"Dear Puppy...

"So begins the 2nd unit of my research into the behavior of the Brother, Heir, and Other Self.

HE'S REFUSED IT.

AND A GENEROUS OFFER IT WAS, SIR.

LISTEN...GET HAHREE...FIND OUT WHAT THE PINHEAD LIKES...KUBLACAINE, WOMEN,...WHAT? AND GET BACK TO ME.

"...(hereafter referred to as HIM).

"Goal: to gain insight into that quality of "MALENESS" which I lack utterly..."

"...and lacking am less thought of than my Twin's dim image in a hallway mirror carelessly passed.

THE EVANGELICALS, SIR... MARCH BAPTISTS FROM ONOLO LINE.

HAVE THEM WAIT IN THE ANTE... NO... BETTER HAVE THEM SHOWN TO THEIR ROOMS... I'LL MEET WITH THEM IN THE UPPER OFFICE BEFORE DINNER.

AND FIND KALIF!

THAT BOY WILL BE THE DEATH OF ME.

"While HE, (to my mind an inferior sort of creature), is given every opportunity to put himself forward.

BIP!

SIR, THE GUY'S FOR REAL. ABSOLUTELY.

NOBODY'S THAT NAIVE... OFFER HIM A PLANET.

HE'S GOT THREE, SIR.

"For the purpose of this experiment, I am using myself as Control since I am the norm...

"... and HE the deviation.

TAKE A LETTER...

THE BARONET PHILLIPE CESARE KALIF ALEXANDER BAJAR.

"TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLECTED GALACTIC SHEET METAL AND MINE WORKERS--" ETC., ETC....

"EVAULATION OF REFLEXES...

"HE responds with a mild disgust to the type of minor irritation that provokes CONTROL beyond reason...

"DEAR MADAM..."

"... I REQUIRE SOME INFORMATION ON ONE OF YOUR FORMER MEMBERS-- LAST NAME, GRIMARR, B--"

"... resulting in revenge behavior of the most destructive sort."

SPLOOSH!

"HE tries always to do what is expected of him...

KALIF.

"LAST NAME: GRINARR...", SIR.

"IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND," ETC., ETC., ETC. ...YOU KNOW WHAT TO SAY...

"...yet fails in this as he ALWAYS does what he's told.

MENTION HOW NICE SHE LOOKED AT THE...WHERE WAS THAT THING?

BRAXIS-7, SIR.

COULD YOU *PRETEND* TO PAY ATTENTION, SON?

"TITANIUM RULE:
Do just what the BIG SHOTS do
Never what they tell you to
Though they hate you when you're tall,
When short, they like you not at all

ABOUT THE REBELLION, SIR...?

I'VE TAKEN CARE OF IT.

MIGHT I ASK, SIR...?

I HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD, DEYN.

Heh heh heh.

"OBSERVATION: Control watches subject more than subject watches control.

PARDON, SIR?

I KEPT HEARING THE WORDS "RENDER UNTO CAESAR!"... I'M A GREAT FRIEND OF RELIGION, DEYN.

SON? ARE YOU LISTENING? SOMEDAY YOU'LL...

"HE responds to the male parent (hereafter, DADDY) with an odd combination of fear and resignation..

ZOUNDS! THE BOY IS NOT WORKING OUT THE WAY I'D PLANNED...

...NOT THE WAY I PLANNED.

OH... AND CONTACT GROMMIT FROM 'LIVING DOLL' CYBERNETICS...

I COULD SHOW YOU MY COLLECTION. WOULD YOU LIKE THAT?

I USED TO COLLECT BUGS, BUT DAD SAYS THAT'S SISSY.

NOW I COLLECT VITAL ORGANS OF ENDANGERED SPECIES.

...TRY TO PUT A HOLD ON THAT DEAL.

"Daddy is a Shit-Head.

DAD TOOK ME ON A HUNTING TRIP TO NEW SIBERIA. IT WAS SO COLD THAT MY BALLS DISAPPEARED AND I THOUGHT THEY WERE GONE FOREVER AND I STARTED TO CRY AND TOLD DAD THAT MY BALLS WERE GONE AND HE WAS SO MAD THAT HE LOCKED ME IN THE ROOM WITH MY COLLECTION OF VITAL ORGANS FOR THREE MALTON UNITS AND I THREW UP.

I WAS NINE CYCLES OLD.

SEE WHAT KIND OF OFFER WE CAN GET FROM "HANDY ANDI"

"NOTE: Subject exhibits adolescent sexual yearning behavior toward Daddy's complimentary Love Zombie.

I USED TO BE AFRAID THAT I HAD THREE BALLS.

BALLS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO DAD.

WHAT TIME AM I MEETING WITH THE SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES TOMORROW?--

DAMN THAT BOY!

BREAKFAST AT 01:15 ALPHA, SIR.

*HE appears to be sneaking up on it.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A WALK IN THE GARDEN? WE COULD HOLD HANDS AND I COULD TOUCH YOUR BREASTS A LITTLE?

WOULD YOU LIKE THAT?

"Thoughts on Sex. My own vague animal stirrings seem to me a longing to incorporate that which is not myself.

"Better to sublimate such stirrings into my search for an intellectual understanding of that "Other" in the person of my friend.

YES... I THINK YOU WOULD?

"Thought: Perhaps this infatuation with the girl-thing could be used to my advantage?

27:12

BIP

"IDEA. Daddy is very predictable.

♪ SUMMON'S IN THE THRONE ROOM WITH AN-NIE, SUMMON'S IN THE THRONE ROOM I KNO-HO-HO-OH! SUMMONS IN THE THRONE ROOM WITH A-A-A-NIEEE... STROMMIN' ON THE OLD... ♪

"We will use Daddy to toss the proverbial wrench into the whirring one-tracked workings of my brother's mind.

♪ ...YOOO KNOOOH! ♪

"Old man thunk out loud.

"I hate Daddy.

DO YOU FIND ME... ATTRACTIVE?

YES, MIGHTY KALIF.

OH, YES... I LIKE THAT VERY MUCH. I THINK WE'RE GOING TO BE GREAT FRIENDS.

I THINK...

BZZRAPP!!

"Tomorrow we will begun to examine 'THE MALE IN CRISIS'."

"Goodnight, Puppy Dear."

01:22 A

WE CAN OVERLOOK THE GRADE POINT AVERAGE IF HIS ACHIEVEMENT TESTS ARE...

LET ME ASSURE YOU, THERE WILL BE NO PROBLEM ON THAT SCORE...

-a chuckle-

...MORE COFFEE?

YES, PLEASE.

BARON, IF YOU'LL PERMIT ME.

WE AT THE AMERCADIAN SPACE ACADEMY WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM WITH YOUR SON'S TEST SCORES OR GRADES IF THE BOY HAS ANYTHING OF HIS DAD IN HIM.

WE ADMIT CADETS ALMOST SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW. WE'RE LOOKING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH STRENGTH OF CHARACTER AND LEADERSHIP ABILITY.

UHM...

...WAS YOUR SON EVER IN THE RANGERS?

AMBROSIA? WAS KALIF EVER...?

OF COURSE, ROD, CLASS A-OK!

WELL, WELL... I'D CERTAINLY LIKE TO MEET THE YOUNG MAN. WILL HE B...

MY SISTER SAYS SHE'S GLAD SHE DOESN'T HAVE TWO PRUNEY PINK THINGS HANGING DOWN THERE GETTING IN THE WAY. IT'S VERY EMBARRASSING WHEN SHE SAYS THINGS LIKE THAT BECAUSE...

...PLEASE DON'T MENTION THIS TO ANYONE -- OH, I KNOW, AND I DO TRUST YOU, BUT PLEASE DON'T MENTION THIS... IT'S VERY EMBARRASSING... BECAUSE I'M NOT REALLY SURE *WHAT* SHE HAS IF SHE DOESN'T HAVE -- YOU KNOW...

I MEAN I HAVE SORT OF A VAGUE IDEA. I'VE HEARD RUMORS -- BUT...

"Oh, Puppy...!

...WELL... I GUESS I WAS SORT OF HOPING THAT -- WHEN WE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER, YOU WOULD -- WELL -- IT'S UP TO YOU, OF COURSE --

-- I WAS HOPING YOU MIGHT SATISFY MY CURIOSITY ABOUT THIS THING.

"Something has changed.

"Something has...

NO, NO, NO... IT'S JUST THAT I'VE RECENTLY TAKEN AN INTEREST IN EMERGING YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS...

...ESPECIALLY IF THEY'RE *EXCITED* BY THINGS OF A *CLASSICAL* NATURE?

HO HO HO HO

FORGET IT, DARLING, HE'S INTO WOMEN.

THAT'S *NOT* THE KIND OF INVESTMENT I'M TALKING ABOUT--

THAT LAST ONE MADE A BUNDLE.

WHAT'S THE NAME OF HIS LATEST?

"AREIOPAGITICA"

OH, GOD! THEY'LL ALL BE WEARING TOGAS NEXT CY...

I TRIED ASKING DAD ABOUT THIS, BUT HE SAID ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW WAS THAT WHEN I GOT OLD ENOUGH TO FEEL LIKE DOING IT...

...AND AGAIN, I'M A LITTLE VAGUE ON THE DETAILS...

...THAT I SHOULD TRY VERY HARD TO GET THE GIRL TO PUT IT IN HER MOUTH...

...BUT THAT I SHOULD NEVER, *UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES*, PUT *HERS* IN MY MOUTH.

THIS HAS ADDED GREATLY TO MY CONFUSION AS I DIDN'T THINK GIRLS HAD ANY.

MAYBE YOU COULD CLEAR THIS UP FOR ME.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PUT IT IN YOUR MOUTH?

OH -- EXCUSE ME -- I FORGET MYSELF.

MY SISTER WRITES SPECULATIVE FICTION WHICH DAD SAYS IS A WASTE OF TIME, AND I AGREE. MY THEORY IS THAT, SINCE SHE DOESN'T HAVE BALLS, SHE HAS HAD TO FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO DO WITH HER LIFE.

WITH THAT KIND OF CREDIT, WE COULD BUILD OUR TABERNACLE AND LAUNCH THE ONOLO DOS MISSION, TOO!

VERY KIND OF THE BARON, BUT I CAN'T HELP WONDERING...

THE LORD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS.

AND IF HE SHOULD ASK US...?

"RENDER UNTO CAESAR"

I TRIED TO TOUCH MY SISTER'S BREAST ONCE--

I SNUCK INTO HER ROOM WHILE SHE WAS SLEEPING AND TRIED TO TOUCH ONE, BUT SHE WAS JUST PRETENDING TO BE ASLEEP, AND RIGHT WHEN I WAS NEARLY TOUCHING IT SHE SAT STRAIGHT UP AND SCREAMED,

"Evaluation of reflexes...

"WHY SHOULD I LET A LOATHSOME LITTLE TOAD LIKE YOU TOUCH MY [illegible] WHEN YOU HAVEN'T EVEN READ MY BOOKS!"

AND I THREW UP.

[illegible] OUT AND DON'T SPEAK TO ME FOR THREE [illegible] UNTIL

HE SAID HE COULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH A SON WHO HAD NO MORE BALLS THAN THAT.

THIS KIND OF TALK MAKES ME VERY NERVOUS

BIP!

I HAD A PET SHREEGUH NAMED SPIKE...

"Subject not responding normally to external stimuli...

BIP!

BUT DAD THOUGHT I WAS GETTING TOO ATTACHED, SO HE TOOK HIM, BUT GAVE ME SPIKE'S VITAL ORGAN'S FOR MY COLLECTION AS A LESSON IN LIFE.

"Subject not responding...

BIP!

BIP!

I WAITED UNTIL DAD WAS GONE BEFORE I THREW UP.

"I'm not having fun anymore.

I'M LEARNING.

"FACT: HE is doing something new
FACT: I did not expect it.
Course of action Watch and Wait.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE SPIKE'S VITAL ORGANS?

I KEEP THEM IN A BOX NEXT TO MY BED.

YES, I THINK YOU WOULD. YOU HAVE SUCH A SWEET... GENTLE DISPOSITION... LIKE I ALWAYS KNEW YOU SHOULD...

TAKE A LETTER...

"All things come to she who waits...

"...and waits... and waits...

TO 'LIVING DOLL' CYBERNETICS... ETC, ETC... GROMMIT-- YOU GOT THE FRANCHISE, BUT I NEED A FAVOR FROM YOU... EROTICA ANDROIDS... AS MANY AS YOU'VE GOT... DON'T BOTHER SENDING ANY OF YOUR OTHER LINES, JUST ANNIES... I NEED ANNIES...

"Theory: This is merely a transition stage (brought on by the loss of the love object) and will ultimately result in some minor alteration of prior patterns."

...POSTHASTE!

"Alternate theory: Boys are very easy to break.

03:33

DO YOU KNOW THESE PEOPLE?

NEVER SAW THEM, OH MIGHTY KALIF.

WHY, *YOU* DID, OH MIGHTY

...

WHO ASKED YOU?

KALIF, YOU DEVIL!

LET'S GET OUT OF HERE...

..I CAN'T STAND CROWDS.

NOR CAN I, OH MIGHTY KALIF.

"Summation we left him peacefully dreaming curled 'foetus-like in the arms of the headless girl horror

"Of what does he dream?

YOU LOOK LOVELY BY MOONLIGHT, DARLING.

I'M GOING TO IGNORE THAT.

YOU ARE TOO KIND, OH MIGHTY KALIF.

AND SO LIGHT ON YOUR FEET. =PUFF=

IF YOU?...

OH, YES...

I DO REALIZE...

ONE DAY ALL THIS WILL BE MINE!...

...OR SHOULD I SAY-- OURS!

"Insight- though I do not pretend to understand the motivations of the human male...

THAT IS... AS SOON AS DAD CASHES 'EM IN...

"...I am able to predict both his response to various queens AND the inevitable outcome of his actions.

WHERE...?

"This may prove an invaluable skill.

...DARLING?!

"BUT WHAT DOES HE DREAM!?

...COME TO ME--

BOOF!

AHHH... BLISS!

"What swarming dark imaginings ferment in his bottled boy's brain?

--WAIT A MARTRON...

...THAT'S NOT...

...LET ME JUST...

...OKAY...

...OUT.

"And of my own dreams...?

"Ah, puppy...!

SOMETHING'S WRONG.

OH, NO, MIGHTY KALIF, EVERYTHING IS PERFECT!

NO-- NO-- LET ME THINK.

IT USED TO BE...

...YOU USED TO...

...YOU WERE SO SWEET AND RESERVED...

...NO... NO!

THAT'S NOT...

...THE WAY YOU... USED TO HANG ON MY ARM...

"Visions of power coil poised for striking in my mind's black core

"I cup my rage like an ember between my palms. I feed it tenderly.

STOP!

"It is fuel for my ambition.

THAT'S NOT...

...YOU WERE...

...IT'S NOT WORKING...

"And he..."

IT'S WORKING PERFECTLY, OH MIGHTY KALIF!

BAHHHHGGH!

"He knows nothing..

"Though his actions cry, 'Most Foul!'...

DARLING!

"...HE IS MAN and INNOCENT.

"CONCLUSION?

"I'm tired, puppy.

I HATE SCHOOL, BUT DAD SAYS A GOOD EDUCATION IS ALL-IMPORTANT FOR THE HEIR TO THE TITLE.

I DO LIKE ONE SUBJECT, THOUGH... BIOLOGY. I LIKE THE FOETAL PIGS.

I ENJOY TAKING THINGS APART TO SEE HOW THEY WORK.

NEXT SEMESTER I'M TAKING POLITICAL SCIENCE.

"I'll never understand boys!"
4.44Ω INDIRA LUCREZIA RONNIE LEE ELLIS BAJAR

"A STITCH IN TIME..."

CYCLE 93
ANARCHERA
THE FAMILY CRÉCHE
12 OCHS
(FORMERLY THE
BARKLY RANCH)
7 OCHS,
NEW WYOMING

A RIDDLE OF PHYSICS:
THOUGH QUARKS ARE SISTERS,
THEY COME IN DIFFERENT
FLAVORS.
SOME ARE CHARMED
SOME ARE STRANGE
SOME HAVE DIRECTION
THOUGH THEY MAY BE COMPANY,
TWO QUARKS DO NOT A
BARYON MAKE.
ONE WILL CRY
ONE WILL DIE
BUT ONLY ONE WILL EVER PSI
ABSENCE MAKES THE
QUARK GROW FONDER

I whose name means Heavenly Womb
Will play Pygmalion to her Galatea . .

.. and shape a Goddess not of clay...

...but out of dancing atoms and
another's Spiralling DNA .

UAF!

Two down. One to go

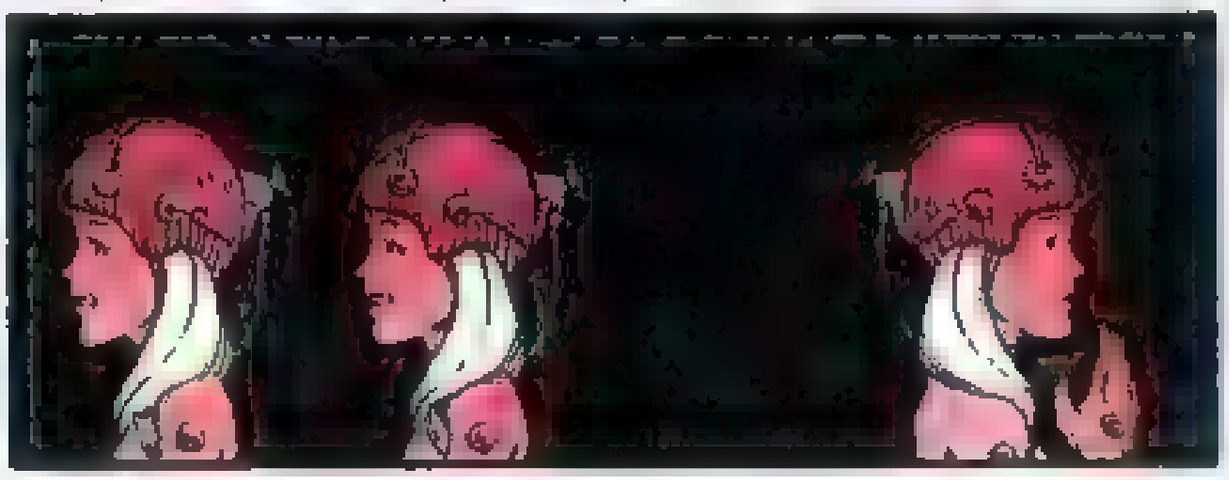
...FROM THE JAWS OF HELL.

CYCLE 94
ANARCHERA
PLAYROOM/WORKSHOP
OF THE BARONET
PHILLIPE CESARE
KALIF ALEXANDER
BAJAR

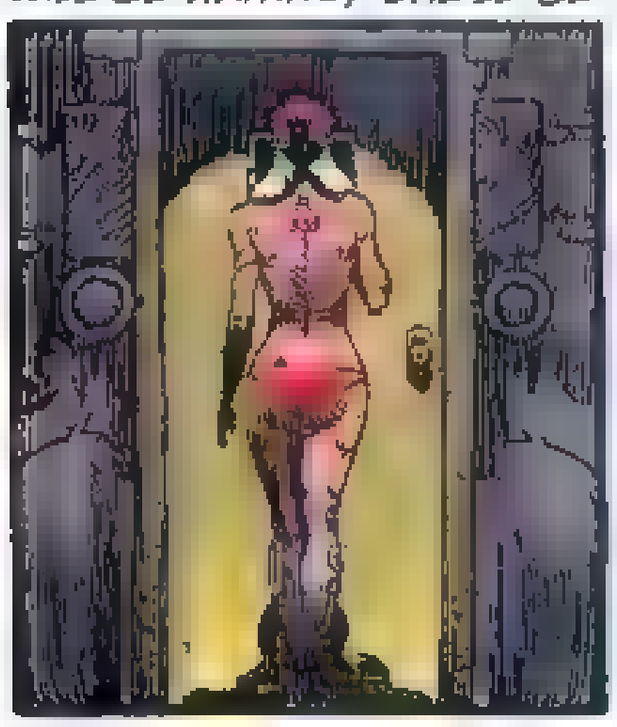
"GLORIANNA (READ GLORIOUS ANNIE) WAS ONE OF THE 'IN TUNE'. MOVING WITH THE RHYTHM OF THE UNIVERSE, RIDING HER CURRENTS, APPEARING SIGH-SOFT WHERE OPPORTUNITY KNOCKED"
--FROM THE DIARY OF
I.L.R.L.E BAJAR

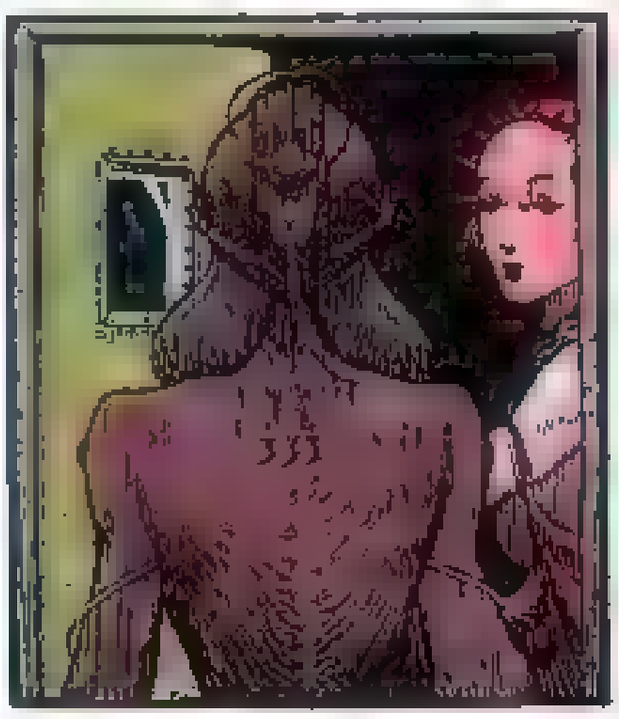
"I'M GOING TO BUY A PAPER DOLL THAT I CAN CALL MY OWN, A DOLL THAT OTHER FELLOWS CANNOT STEAL AND THEN THE FLIRTY,

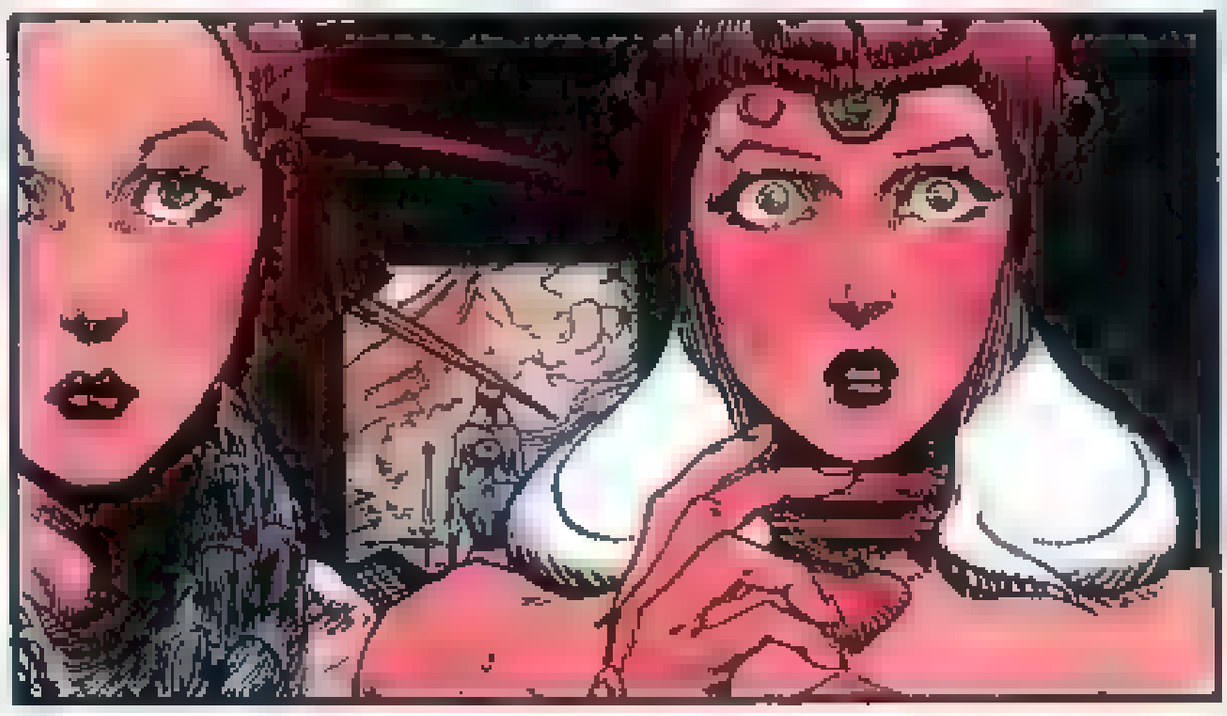
FLIRTY GUYS WITH FLIRTY, FLIRTY EYES WILL HAVE TO FLIRT WITH DOLLIES THAT ARE REAL. WHEN I COME HOME AT NIGHT SHE



WILL BE WAITING, SHE'LL BE THE TRUEST DOLL IN ALL THIS WORLD I'D RATHER HAVE A PAPER DOLL TO CALL MY OWN THAN

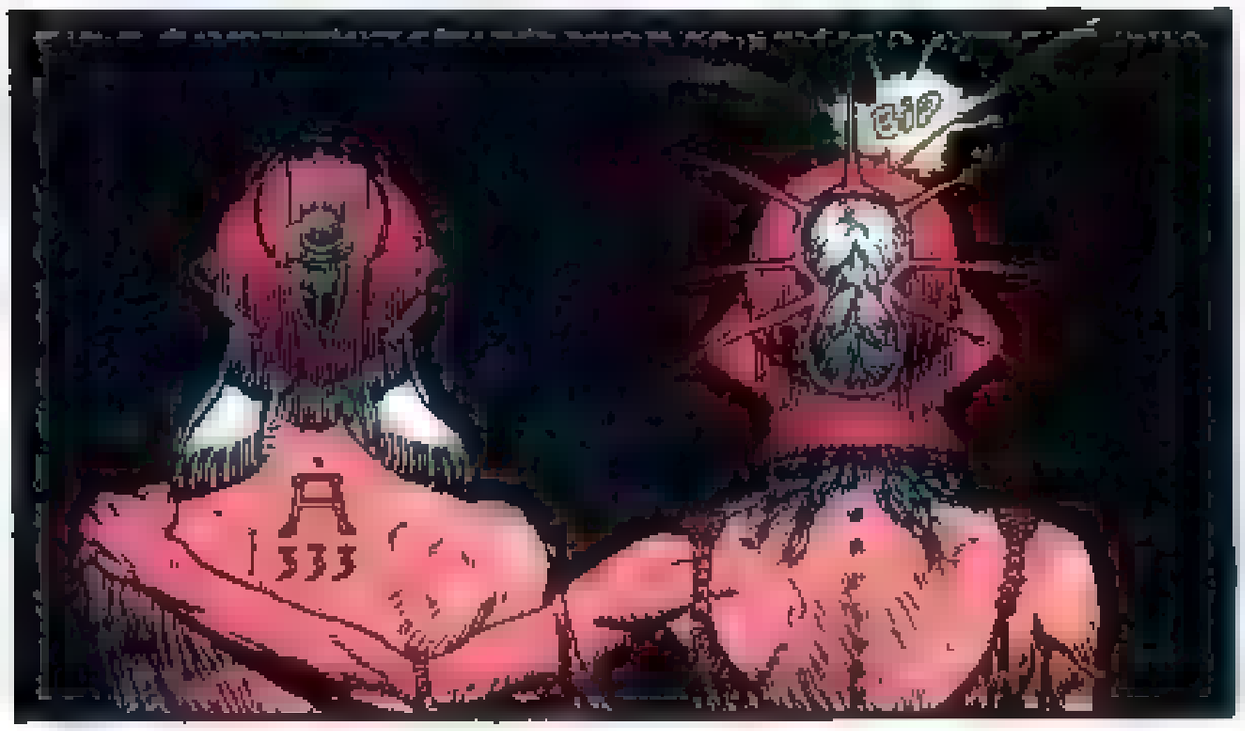


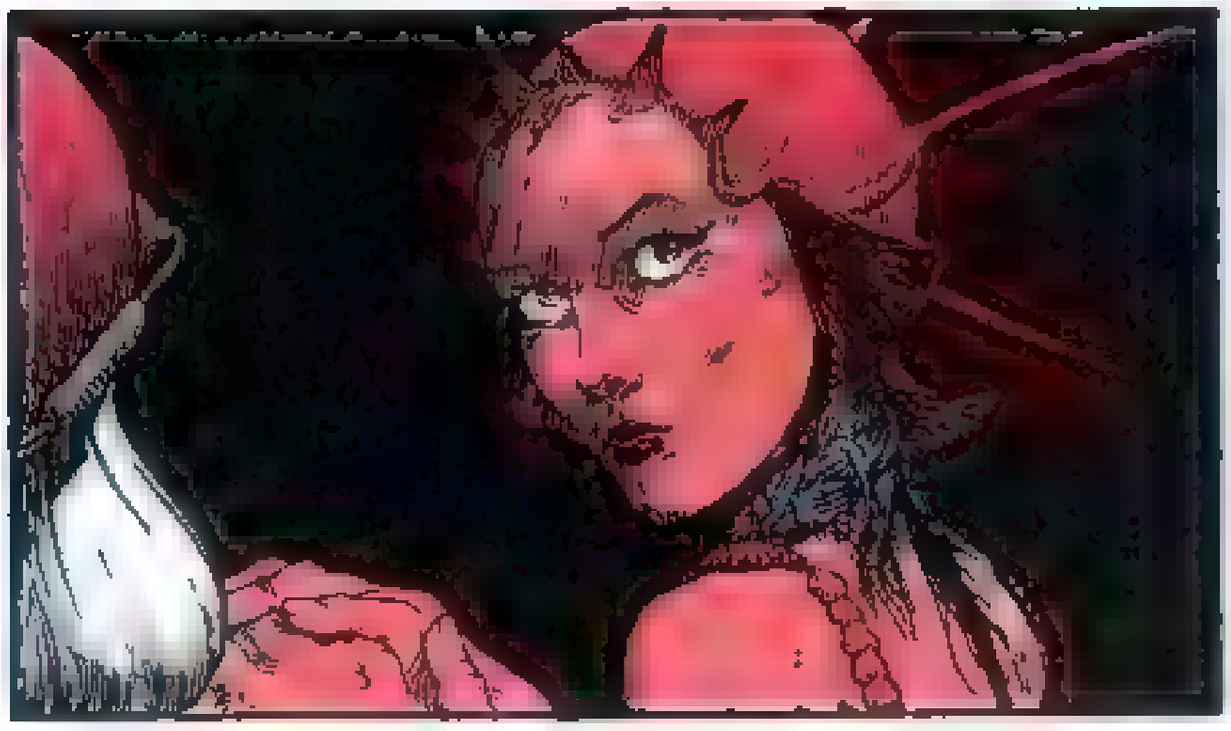




TO HAVE A FICKLE-MINDED REAL LIVE GIRL "

LYRICS AND MELODY BY JOHNNY S. BLACK © 1942





"MUMBO-JUMBO!"

CYCLE 132 ANARCHERA

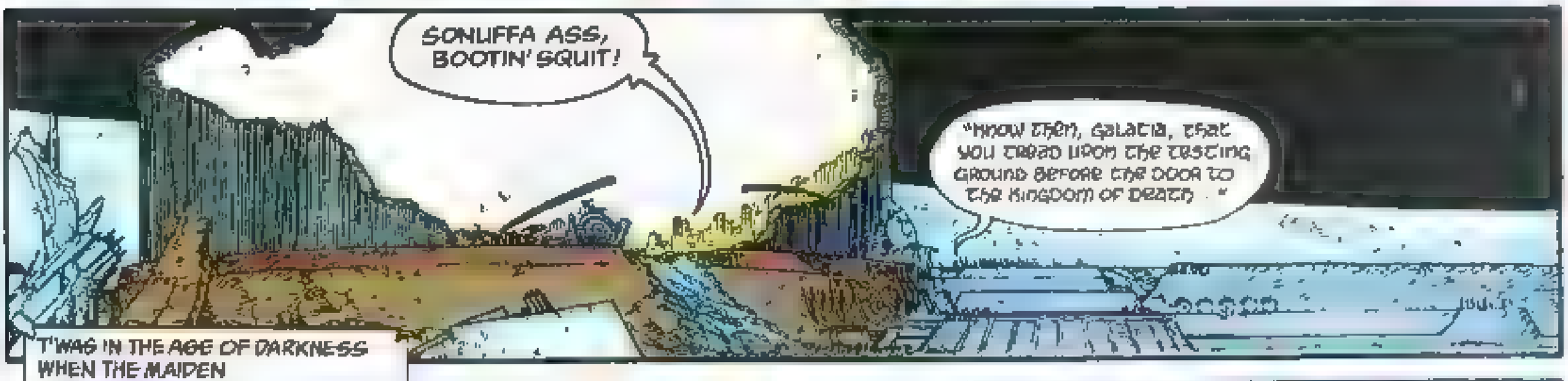
OMEGA: DISQUE 6, AUTOMATED FARMING DISQUE AND PENAL COLONY BUILT BY GALATIAL FIBER FEED & FERMENTING, IER-CO (DEFUNCT) ABANDONED AFTER THE OVERTHROW OF THE INCORPORATED ELYSIAN REPUBLIC, CYCLE 1 ANARCHERA.

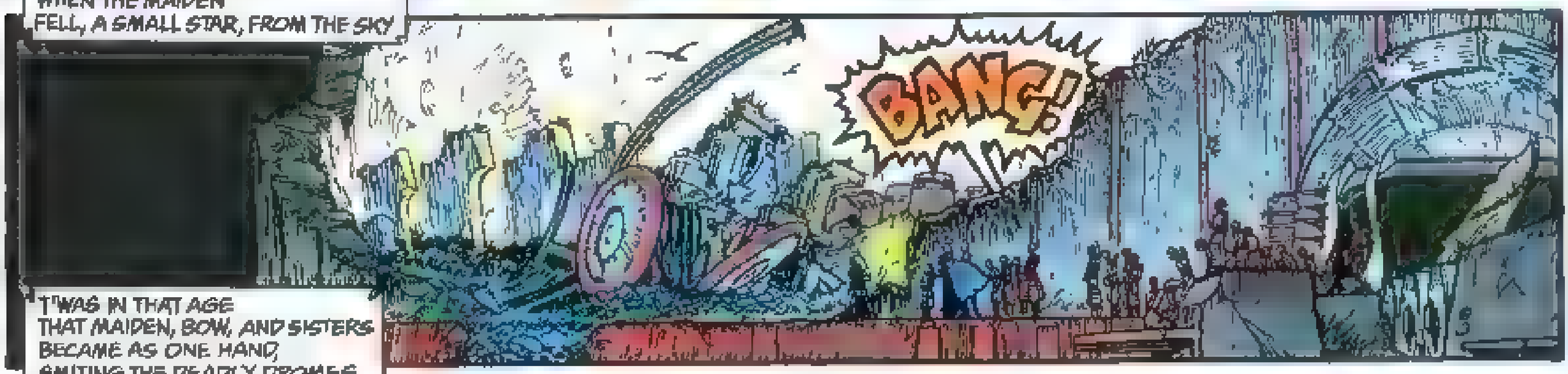
"So shut your eyes while mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock in the misty sea,
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod."

--EUGENE FIELD, POEMS OF CHILDHOOD

LISTEN TO THE 9Hh TAEL OF TRIVIA
AH SEHD, WHUD'YOO SAY, BOY?
AH SEHD YOO GODDA FACE LAHK TH'UNNASAHV LIFFA PIG'S BUTT.
"IT IS I, GALATIA, CHILD OF THE VOID..."

T'WAS IN THE AGE OF DARKNESS WHEN OUR ENEMIES HELD THE SACRED SEED CHAMBERS
SHUT Y'HOLE FO'AH PLUG IT FOE YUH!
"... THE MOTHER'S STARRY WOMB."


SONUFFA ASS, BOOTIN' SQUIT!
"KNOW THEN, GALATIA, THAT YOU TREAD UPON THE TESTING GROUND BEFORE THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM OF DEATH."
T'WAS IN THE AGE OF DARKNESS WHEN THE MAIDEN FELL, A SMALL STAR, FROM THE SKY



LOR, BUBBUH-- YOODUN BLOAD M'NOZE AWF!

HE'S RAHT PERTY AIN' E?

SHEE-HUT!

"YOU ARE ABOUT TO LEAP THE CHASM BETWEEN WORLDS."

IMOAN HAF TA TAR Y'HAID KLEEN AWF!

SHUFFIZ PECKER H'LIPPIZ GULLIT, DOODY.

CUT 'M BUBBUH!

"KNOW THAT IT IS BETTER TO RUN UPON MY BLADE AND PERISH THAN TO MAKE THE ATTEMPT WITH FEAR IN THY HEART."

YOO GOAN GIT Y'HAID BUHSTID T'KEENGDUM KUHM!

AH DOAN MUCH LAHK T'DOODIS, BUBBUH...

N'DOODY? Y'GIT'NY CLOSER 'N IMOAN SLAP Y'UPSAHD TH' HAID!

DECK TH' BAHSSID, BUBBUH!

©'91 Eastman Laird

IMOAN LAY Y'TA WASTE!

GLUP

THWUNK

SONG OF THE DROMES...

AWWWW... N'GIDDUHP, DOODY...

SHEE-HUT!

AWWW... C' MOAN! YOO AIN' BEIN' A SPORT!

O, THEY ATE THE MOTHER'S SEED AND DID NOT PLANT!

SHEE-HUT

HUH? WHUHZZAT?

BZZZZZZT

HOOWHEE! DO YOU SEEDAT L'TUL THANG, BOYD?

LOR AH AIN' NEFFUH SEED NUFFIN DAT L'TUL! IMOAN LOCK ASS WIF DAT TOONITE!

SHEE-HUT!

HAY, URRYL! SHE AIN' NO BIGGER'N A FIST!

THEY DRANK THE MOTHER'S BLOOD AND DID NOT BREW!

AND HER DAUGHTERS TOOK AS SLAVES OR PAINFUL DEATH DID GRANT!

EXPAND... 2...3... 4... RELEASE... 2... 3...4...

... CONTROL... 2...3...4...

IMOAN TAR YOO HUP, SWEETHANG!

...HAMMEE SUHMADAT...

WHAR HA' YOO BIN AWL M' LAHF, SUGUH!

THEY WERE DUMBER THAN THE DAY IS LONG! THEY WERE! AND MEANER THAN THE SKY IS BLUE!

...ORDDLE HEADS...

LOR, YES! IMOAN HAMMEE SUM ANGEL PIE!

HAAR! AHHRRRRRAHH!

SONG OF THE MAIDEN...

WHY ONE BREAST?
SA D SHE.
WHO KNOWS?
SAID WE.

...SMELL LIKE THREE-MALTON SKREEBONS

AND NO BOW?
SAID SHE.
NO BOW WE KNOW?
SAID WE.

EAT DIRT, WOMBRIPPER!

...YUK!

...ICK...

NOW!

A BOW FOR THEE!
SAID SHE
WE'LL TAKE THE BREAST!
SAID WE.

IF [illegible] COULD SEE ME...

SONG OF THE GREAT BATTLE...

MOTHER-KILLING BLIGHT!

O, THE DROMES WERE BAD
THE DROMES WERE BAD
THE DROMES WERE BAD
THE DROMES WERE BAD
THE DROMES WERE BAD
THE DROMES WERE BAD
AND SO WE HAD TO KILL THEM!

O, WE FOUGHT THEM FAIR
THEY CUT US DOWN
WE FOUGHT WITH HONOR
THEY WIPED US OUT
AND THEN WE FOUGHT WITH
STEALTH AND GUILE
AND THAT IS HOW WE
KILLED THEM

YOO WOOD'N DO DIS T'OLE BUBBUH, WOOD YOO L'TUL DARLIN' PIE?

...mr. green jeans...

NAWWWW... L'TUL SUGUH BRITCHIZ WOOD'N DO DIS T'OLE...

URK!

BUZZAT'T

BUZZAT'T

BUZZAT'T

9 MARTRONS, NOT TOO SHODDY!

SO are you brought into the circle!

I enter the circle in perfect love and perfect trust ..

Galatia 9!

Star Mother! Keeper of the night! Behold your daughter, Galatia 9, who is now made sister and amazon!

.. found the still!

AWRIGHT!

DO YOU SWEAR THE OATH?

I DO!

DRINK UP!

REPEAT: I, GALATIA 9, DO SWEAR TO DEFEND MY SISTERS TO THE LIMITS OF MY POWERS...

SONG OF THE CUP

O TAKE MY CUP
AND FILL IT UP
WITH WINE, WINE, WINE!
SO THAT THE LAD
THAT ONCE LOOKED BAD
LOOKS FINE, FINE, FINE!
A MORTAR NEEDS
A PESTLE...
A SHEATH, A BLADE
YOU SEE!
SO TAKE MY CUP
AND FILL ME UP
WITH WINE
SOOOO-OH-OH FINE!

OVER HERE!

STUFF GOES DOWN WITH A VENGEANCE!

I, GALATIA 9, DO SWEAR TO DEFEND MY SISTERS TO THE LIMITS...

...TO KEEP A TIGHT LIP WHEN THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT UNSAID...

.. SHIT'S NOT TOO SHODDY!

...TIGHT LIP WHEN THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT UNSA..

HE'S IN THE VATROOM!

TO LOVE THE MOTHER IN...

GOOD WORK!

LOVE THE MOTHER IN MYSELF...

TO CONVERT TO COMPOST THOSE WHO CHEAPEN LIFE, MAIM OUR WOMYN, UPSET THE BALANCE OF THE MOTHER...

TORCH THE LOGS!

TO TURN TO COMPOST...

...ALMOST DONE...

HO! HAVE YOU GOT THE BOY OILED AND READY?

...UPSET THE BALANCE OF THE MOTHER...

GAL-A-A-A-TIA!!

Put one hand under your feet and one over your head and repeat:

This I swear on my mother's womb, the blood of my heart, and on any lives that might be mine upon the end of this womon span, and if I break this oath,...

BLOOD IN MY HEART AND ON MY... shit.

...Let my lot be worse than the lots of those who lived in the Burning Times, only worse in the knowledge that I brought this ghastly fate down upon my own head, and let my blade turn against me. So be it.

All between palm and palm belongs to the mother.

SONG OF THE EARTH BORN STAR...

THIS I SWEAR ON MY MOTHER'S WOMB, THE ..

WHAT?

ALL BETWEEN PALM AND PALM BELONGS TO THE MOTHER.

THERE'S A HOLE IN THE EARTH AND THE MAIDEN IS THE SEED AND THE SEED IS MADE OF FIRE AND THE FIRE IS FROM A STAR

...ALL BETWEEN PALM AND PALM BELONGS TO THE MOTHER...

AND A STAR SO BRIGHT YES A STAR SO BRIGHT A TINY STAR SO BRIGHT WE SHUT OUR EYES AGAINST THE LIGHT.

GALA-A-A-TIA!!

=HIC=

Galatia 9... having taken the 1st step, prepare for the second. In the service of life you must pass beyond the life you have known here...

BUT BEFORE THE HOLE A RUMBLING THE EARTH BEGAN A CRUMBLING THE MAIDEN WENT A TUMBLING...

I HAVE TAKEN... =HIC-CUP= WHOOOPS!

WHOOSH

WHERE'D SHE GO?

...HARD...

WHU' HAPPENED?

OH?

YEAH!

I AM...

...THIS RIGHT...?

PASSING BETWEEN THE LIFE I HAVE KNOWN?

TAKE OFF THE BLINDFOLD!

I TAKE OFF THE BLINDFOLD!

...THIS A TEST...?

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

I DON'T KNOW!

.. DIDN'T TELL ME ABOUT THIS PART

COME BACK!

WHERE AM I? ...HE...EE...EE...E!!

?

WHRRIIRRRIIRR-

ZITTZ ZITTZ ZITTT

BOOF

OW.

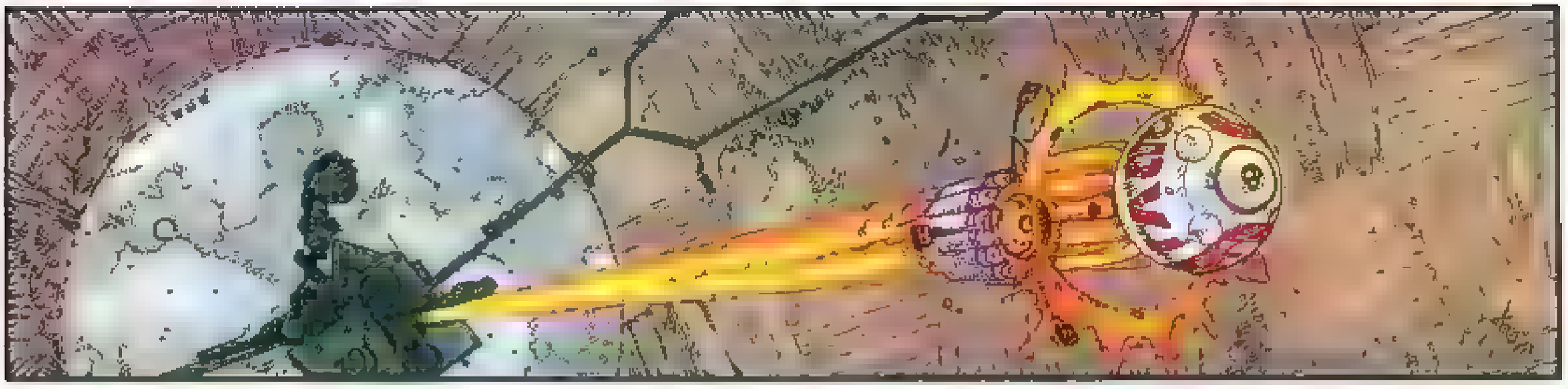
KLIK!

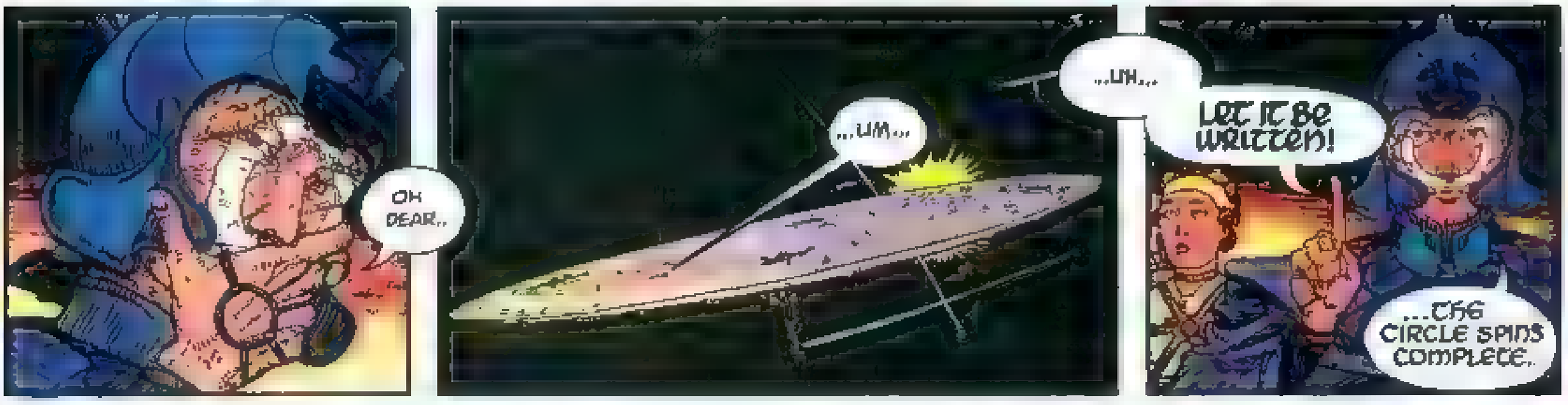
RUMBLE

SSSSS SSSSS SSSSS

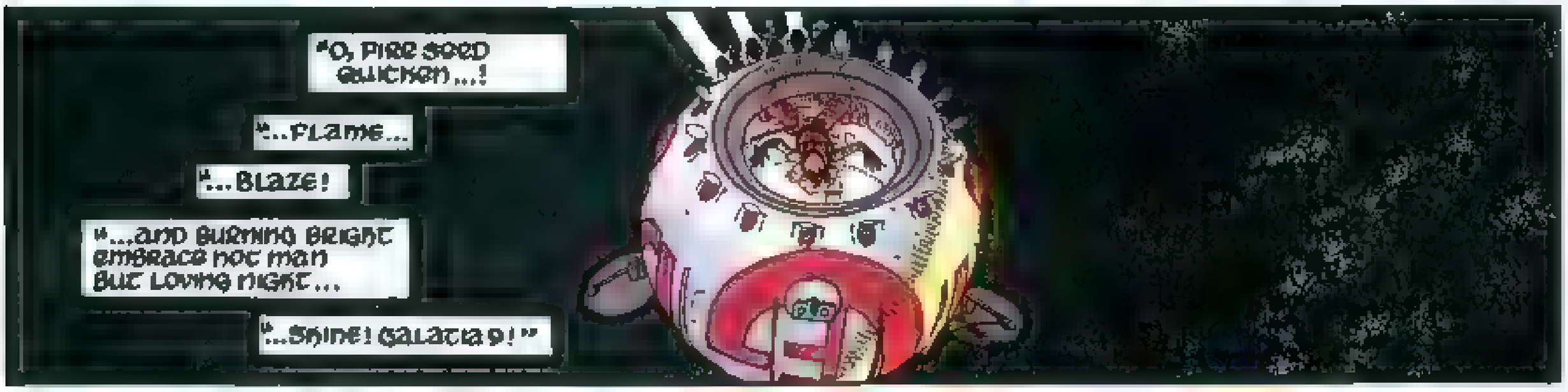
PUH TOOM!

AND MUCH TO OUR SURPRISE
WHEN WE OPENED UP OUR EYES
WE WERE SAYING OUR GOODBYES
FOR THE LADY SPREAD HER THIGHS
AND A STAR WAS BORN
YES A STAR WAS BORN
A TINY STAR WAS BORN
YES, A STAR WAS BORN OF EARTH




OH DEAR..
..UM...
..UH...
LET IT BE WRITTEN!
...THE CIRCLE SPINS COMPLETE..

"...AND OUR MAIDEN SWEET BOW-BRINGER, STAR-BORN FIRE-SEED WHICE...
"...HAVING SHARED OUR FIGHT, RETURNS TO THE SKY FROM WHENCE SHE FELL...
"...TO SHARE HER LOVELY LIGHT!


"O, FIRE SEED QUICKEN...!
"...FLAME...
"...BLAZE!
"...AND BURNING BRIGHT EMBRACE NOT MAN BUT LOVING NIGHT...
"...SHINE! GALATIA!"

SO SPEAKS TRIVIA.
I THINK I'M GONNA BE SICK.

CYCLE 132
ANARCHERA

THE VOTE

..IF YOU INSIST ON...

YOU REALLY SHOULD TRY ONE OF THESE, MAHKINA!

THANK YOU VERY MUCH NO. NOW... WHERE...?

hum !!!

"WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE. TRIED TO SMOKE A RUBBER CIGAR. IT WAS LOADED AND EXPLODED... SILENT NIGHT..."
--OBSCURE RHYME ATTRIBUTED TO THE CHILDREN OF EARTH.

OH YES...!

IF YOU INSIST ON TALKING ABOUT TOTALLY NONSEXUAL ENERGY SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUSTING IN A VACUUM INTO A NORMALLY HUNG HUMANOID, YOU CAN JUST BE THAT WAY!

I DID!

YOU DIDN'T!

could you die!

HE HAD A FIT?

THREATENED TO CALL THE UNION.

OH NO!

ha-ha-ha-ha...

..ha ha-ha-ha...!

ISN'T IT, THOUGH! ...MORE DRINK, PERSONUS?

PLEASE.

oh-h-h-h-h-h-h... ÷sigh÷ ÷SIGH÷ ... ME, TOO. THE QUIET BEFORE THE STORM BEFORE THE QUIET. ha ha-ha-ha-ha...! DON'T TRY SO HARD, EX .. THE CAMERA'S ALWAYS LOVED YOU! i don't think i know what... YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL, DON'T BE... silly, i know...

WHOMP!

HARK!

GRIMDZZZZWIZE

SOUND!

a portent?

PUFF THUMP

=HIC=

WHERE'S THE HEAD?

UP LEFT

TWO O'CLOCK

that way

=UPP!=

I SUPPOSE WE'LL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THIS?

USE IT!

OF COURSE!

a challenge to our ar--

SHHHHHHH! WE HAVE AGREED...

UTTERETH NOT... THE UNNAMEABLE...

..UNFATHOMABLE.. ..THE HOLY MOST. .THE ONE!!!

KRALP

I forget myself.

ANYTHING TO DRINK?

CLINK

THERE!

ELIXIR!

help yourself.

A DAUGHTER OF IMPULSE!

PRIMAL!

most definitely of the flesh

WHO ARE YOU BOZOS?

THE SOURCE ... *THE SILENCE* ... the lamb ...
OMINOUS ABSENCE ... *RUAH* ...
the dangling zed ... INEFFABLE ZILCH ...
.. *EGG BREATH IN THE VIRGIN SHELL* ..
blood fruit of the death tree ...

..THE FATHER ... ...the son.
.*THE SPIRIT*..

CLIK

VIRRRR

CLIK

WAIT A MARTRON! ... "ARCHEORGANAAPOCOLYPSIA", RIGHT?

"AND, LO, FROM HIS *GRIEF* CAME A *VISION* IN WHICH THE *UNIVERSE TREMBLED* AND WAS *BATHED* IN *TERRIBLE LIGHT*, AND HE SHRANK IN HIS *GRIEF* FROM THE *VISION* AND WAS AFEARD AND CRIED OUT:
"LO! I AM AFEARED! HOW IS THERE A *BEING* THAT HAS *THREE FORMS*, AND HOW CAN *THREE FORMS* BE *ONE BEING*?"
AND THE *VISION* SAID:
"THE LIGHT IS *GOD*, *GOD* IS *THREE*, *THREE* ARE *ONE*, *ONE* IS *A-T* AND *A-T* IS THE *ETERNAL*, UNSPEAKABLE NAME OF ...

... FATHER ...

CLIK

... SON ...

CLIK

... HOLY SPIRIT "IN"

CLIK

YEAH ...

SUCKED MEAT! I THOUGHT THEY SHOT YOU GUYS.

HEALOT! blasphemer! *HERATIC!*

WHAT WAS THAT DIRECTOR'S NAME?

SATAN! BEALZEBUB! sambo thrace-smythe!

YEAH ... THAT'S THE ASSHOLE.

HAVE ANOTHER ... ...divine nectar... ...ON US.

HIS *INTERPRETATION* OF THE PIECE WAS SOMEWHAT OFF CENTER ...

CLIK

...ABOUT FIFTY LIGHT-YEARS.

CLIK

CLIK completely out of the ball park.

HE WANTED ME TO PLAY SPIRIT AS *PNEUMA*! CAN YOU IMAGINE! UNFORGIVEABLE! the worst!

THE ETERNAL MOTHERLY, FEMININE, VIRGINAL SPIRIT ... *RUAH* ... THE SILENCE!

CLIK

HE NEUTERED IT!

IRRELEVANT!

WHAT?

CLIK

FLUFF! THE PIECE WAS FLUFF! THE MATERIAL. ART FOR THE SAKE OF ART...

SHHHHHH!

"WHAT GOOD A PRETTY VERSE TO ME, MY POLITICS ARE POETRY."

PARDON... ALL GREAT ART IS POLITICAL.

"ALL A-T IS SPIRITUAL... THE REVOLUTIONARY ACT."

CLIK

CLIK

HO...

THAT'S PRECISELY WHY WE SEEK THE END.

CLIK

OMEGA

fini.

COME AGAIN?

why else would we be headed straight into that yellow dwarf?

CLIK

WHAT?

FIND GLORY!

KNOW GRACE!

suffer for the sins of an uninspired director!

NOT WITH ME YOU DON'T!

THERE'S LITTLE YOU CAN DO...

It'S BeeN decided.

ZZZZ

OKAY! YOU SIMPERING WIMPS ARE GONNA STRAIGHTEN UP AND TURN THIS THING AROUND OR I'M GONNA PUNCH YOUR LIGHTS OUT-- GOT IT?

AH, PAIN!

AH, SORROW!

ah, martyrdom!

...NOT THE WAY TO GO WITH THIS THING...

SLAM!

I'M ONLY DOING THIS FOR YOUR SAKE GUYS. HEY...! YOU KIDS HAD YOUR LITTLE HEARTS SET ON MEETING ETERNITY AS A TRINITY?

I MAKE FOUR.

FOUR'S A QUARTET.

A PROBLEM. true. WE HADN'T CONSIDERED.

THERE IS A SOLUTION THAT I BELIEVE WOULD MEET WITH YOUR UNANIMOUS APPROVAL. IF I MAY?

CERTAINMENT

HERE'S THE SCOOP: THE THREE OF YOU HEAD FOR THE NEAREST HANDY ESCAPE POD AND TAKE OFF STRAIGHT OUT OF THE GALAXY LIKE A BAT OUTA HELL. SO... YOU'LL BE GOING FASTER AND FASTER, AND AS YOU GET CLOSER TO THE SPEED OF LIGHT, TIME REVERSES AND YOU'RE GOIN BACK FURTHER AND FURTHER, AND WHEN YOU REACH LIGHT-SPEED... BAMOOO

...YOU BECOME PURE ENERGY, MERGE, BECOME LIGHT, THREE BEINGS IN ONE, PRE-CREATION, PREGNANT WITH POSSIBILITY... IN A WORD: GOD!

JOY!

RAPTURE!

the pinnacle, craft-wise.

AND ONCE I SPREAD THE WORD, THRACE-SMYTHE'LL FIND HIS ASS IN TIGHT ORBIT 'ROUND HIS EARS YOU'LL BE MARTYRS.

A SAINT!

OUR PROPHET!

CLIK CLIK CLIK

many thanks

DON'T MENTION IT. YOU CAN EVEN USE MY POD IF YOU LIKE OH .. I GUESS THAT MEANS I'LL HAVE TO TAKE THE SHIP...

WHAT NEED THIS EARTHLY VESSEL WHEN ALL INFINITY LIES WAITING?

WELL SAID.

ditto

EXACTLY MY THINKING. UH... CAN I GET THAT INTO WRITING?

IT'S ON THE RECORD-O-DROID, ALONG WITH OUR PASSAGE INTO IMMORTALITY.

WELL, TOODLES, KIDS. IT'S BEEN REAL

CIAO!

SUCKERS.

CYCLE 134
ANARCHERA

VARIOUS POINTS OF INTEREST AROUND THE CIVILIZED UNIVERSE

"DEAD RECKONING"

"WHEN DEVILS WILL THE BLACKEST SINS PUT ON THEY DO SUGGEST IT FIRST WITH HEAVENLY SHOWS AS I DO NOW."
--IAGO
OTHELLO
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

YOU'RE *SURE* ABOUT THAT? HMMMMMM. THAT'S INTERESTING. THANKS.

YOU BET YOUR *BOOTS*, BARON OLE BUDDY! THIS ONE'S IN THE HOLDING BAY... AND MAKE THAT *STANDARD* CREDITS.

YOU'VE GOT A *BET*, WEATHERAL... 20,000 IT IS... IN... UH... STANDARD CREDITS.

FIND OUT WHAT'S UP AND THEN STOP IT! I DON'T PLAN TO LOSE ANOTHER BET WITH "WINDBAG" WEATHERAL.

CERTAINLY, DEAR FATHER. I HAVE A FRIEND... A FRATERNITY BROTHER. HE SHOULD BE DELIGHTED TO HELP US OUT.

IF THIS IS TRUE... YOU BET YOUR SWEET ASS I'LL HELP. IF WE CAN'T WIN FAIR AND SQUARE, WE'LL LOSE BIG TIME.

THAT'S RIGHT, POP... I *HEAR* THERE'S A WRENCH IN THE WORKS --*IF-YOU-KNOW-WHAT-I-MEAN*? NOTHING THAT ISN'T FIXABLE. JUST MAKE SURE I'M NAMED ATTACK CO-ORDINATER, THEN LEAVE IT TO ME.

I DON'T WANT TO KNOW *ANYTHING* ABOUT THIS, SON. DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO.

IT'S DONE, DAD.

"I'VE GOT MY FINGER ON IT NOW"

CYCLE 134
ANARCHERA

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

THE GRADUATING CLASS OF
THE AMERCADIAN SPACE ACADEMY
—VS.—
THE GRADUATING CLASS OF
ST. ARNOLD ZAPOROFFSKY

"A SHIP IS WOOD AND METAL,
IS METAL, RIGGING AND SAIL
SHE'S BUT AN IRON KETTLE,
WHEN HEARTS ABOARD HER FAIL."
--JAMES A WILDER
(CHIEF SEA SCOUT)
THE SEA SCOUT MANUAL

"(S)HE WHO, FROM ZONE TO ZONE, GUIDES THROUGH THE BOUNDLESS SKY THY CERTAIN FLIGHT, IN THE LONG WAY THAT I MUST TREAD ALONE, WILL LEAD MY STEPS ARIGHT."
--BRYANT

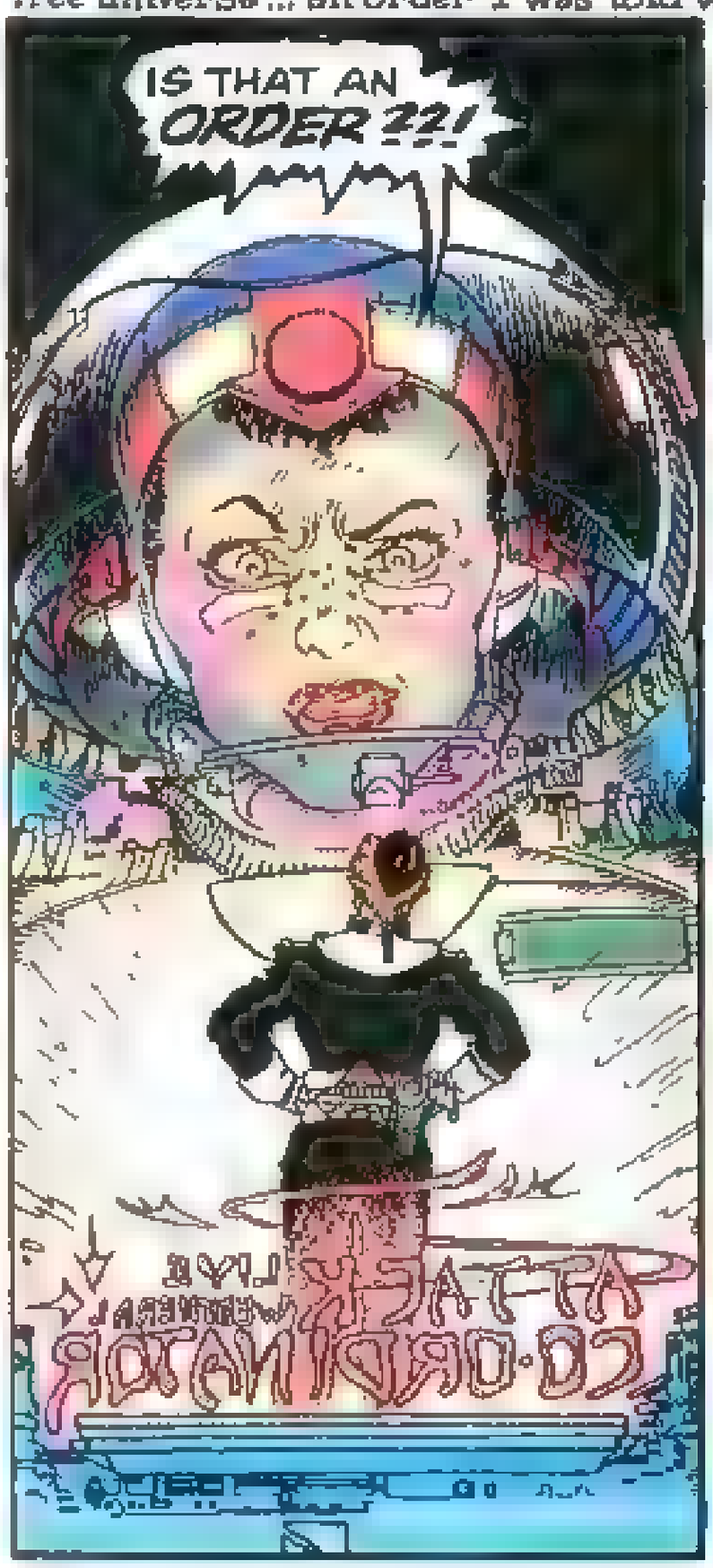
Chapter VII

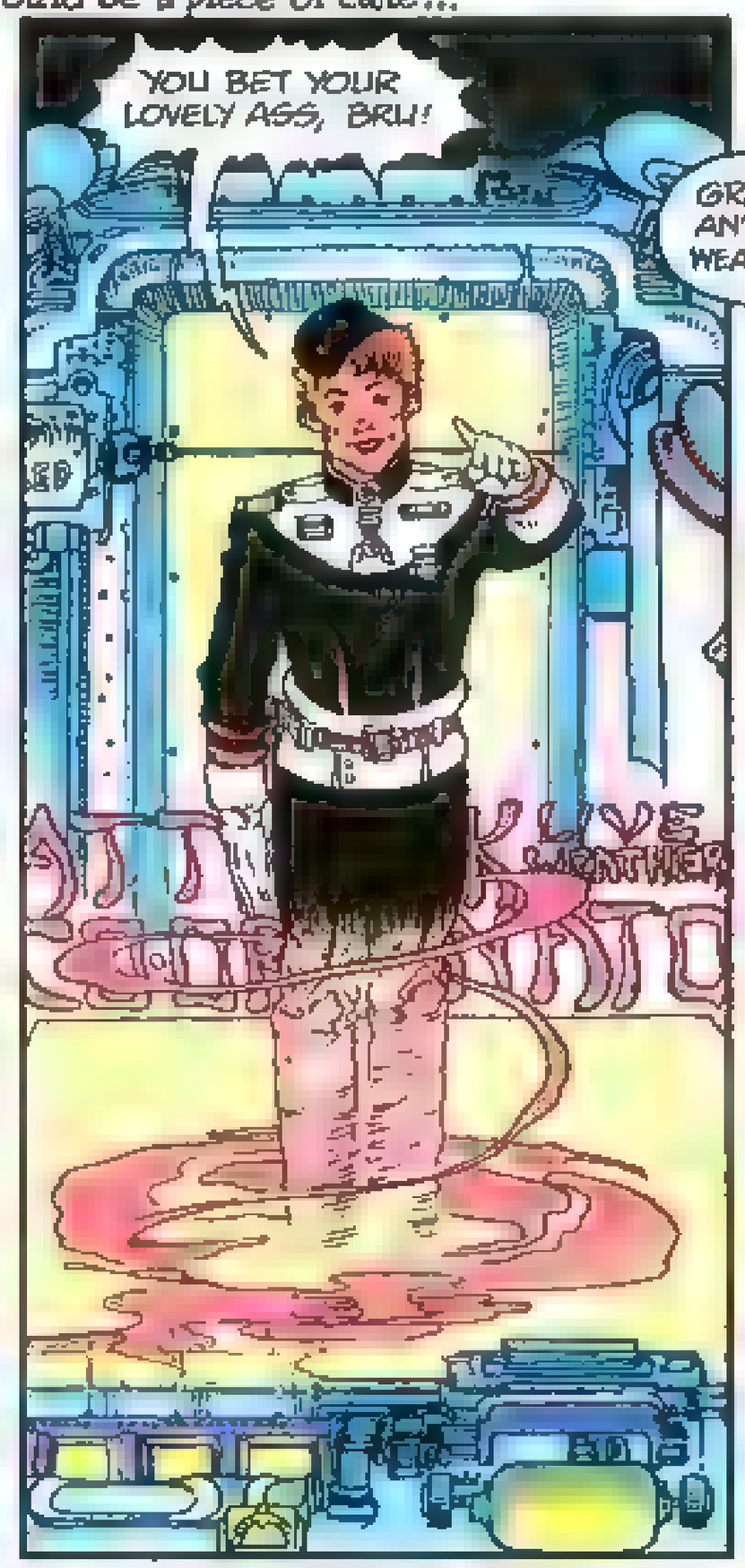
I remember it like it was yesterday. Mysolf and Sgt. "Cookie" Fabre were participatin' as point ship in the A.S.A. class of 134 commencement games.

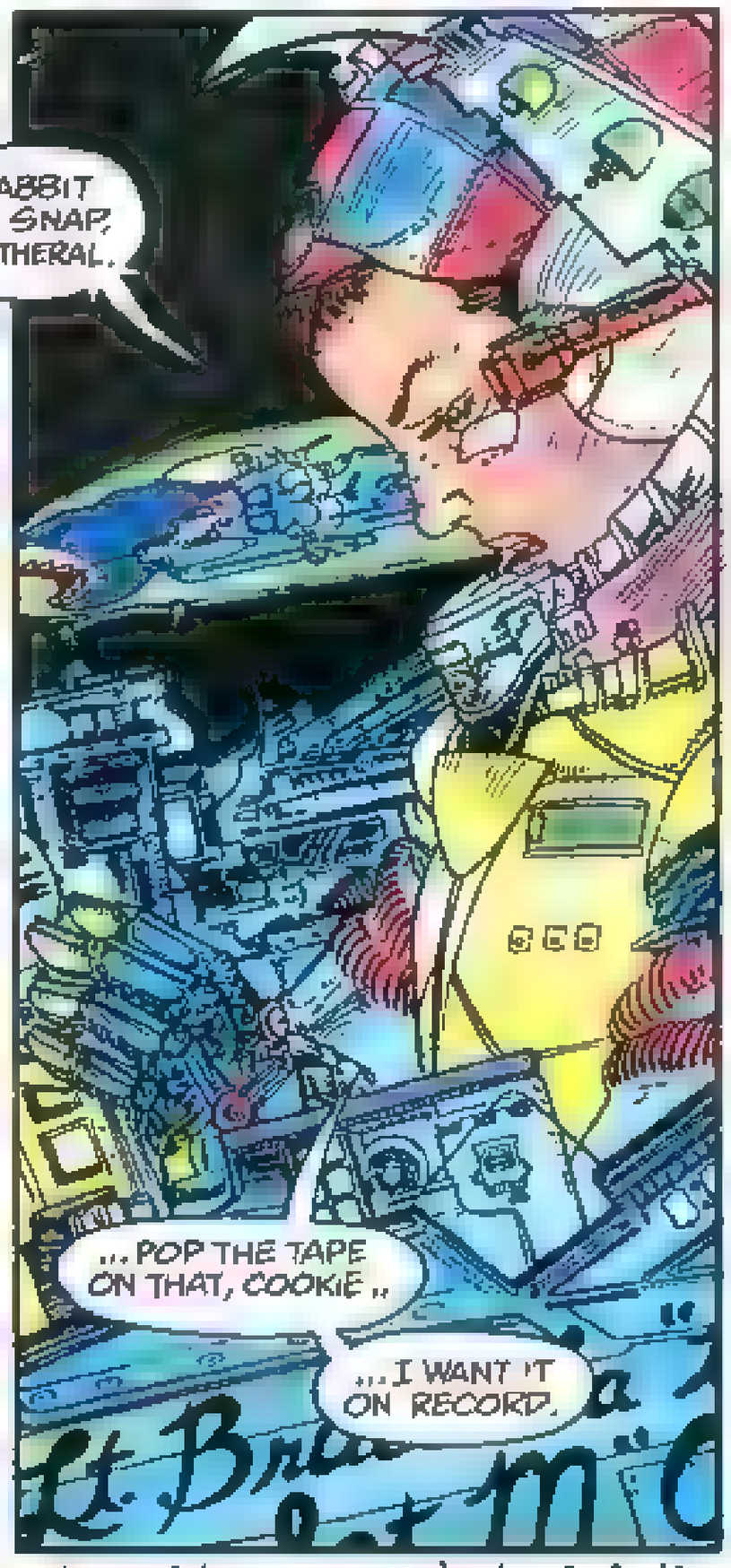
My spirits were as high as a giggle-head and my ego as shiny as my new commission.

Little did I know that I was about to receive an order.

"... an order that would change the course of my life... an order on which would turn (indirectly) the fate of the free universe... an order I was told would be a piece of cake...







"We were ordered to make a run thru the off-limits NEUTRAL ZONE 8 (my bones turned to mega jelly)... to elude the vitrolic VERCADIAN PROTECTOR ANDROIDS (my blood turned to H_2O).. and to EGG SAINT ARNOLD ZAPOROFFSKY'S MILITARY PEP BAND as they played on PORT-O-BOY GAZEBO 16."

"My heart leaped into my gullet as I turned to 'Cookie' and said for perhaps the thousandth time without an answering laugh..

LET'S MAKE LIKE A KRYSTAL AND BLOW!

"As 'Cookie' whipped a 200-vilo batch of imitation powdered egg substitute into the ship's evacuation hopper (with which to soufflé said pep band), I fielded the ribald chatter from my brave squadron-mates as we hurtled toward our appointment with destiny!

HEY, "COOKIE"! DON'T FORGET THE PARSLEY!

YO, BRU!... WHAD'YA GET IF YOU CROSS A DROMORUSTLER WITH A PLEASURE DROID?

MAMA SPANK

JUMP UP MY BUTT, DAILY!

"And before you could say 'up the brigade' we found ourselves entering the more than usually deadly NEUTRAL ZONE 6...

WARNING!!! YOU ARE NOW ENTERING NEUTRAL ZONE 6. VANISH OR BE VAPORIZED!"

UP YOURS, TOOTS, WE'RE COMIN' THRU!

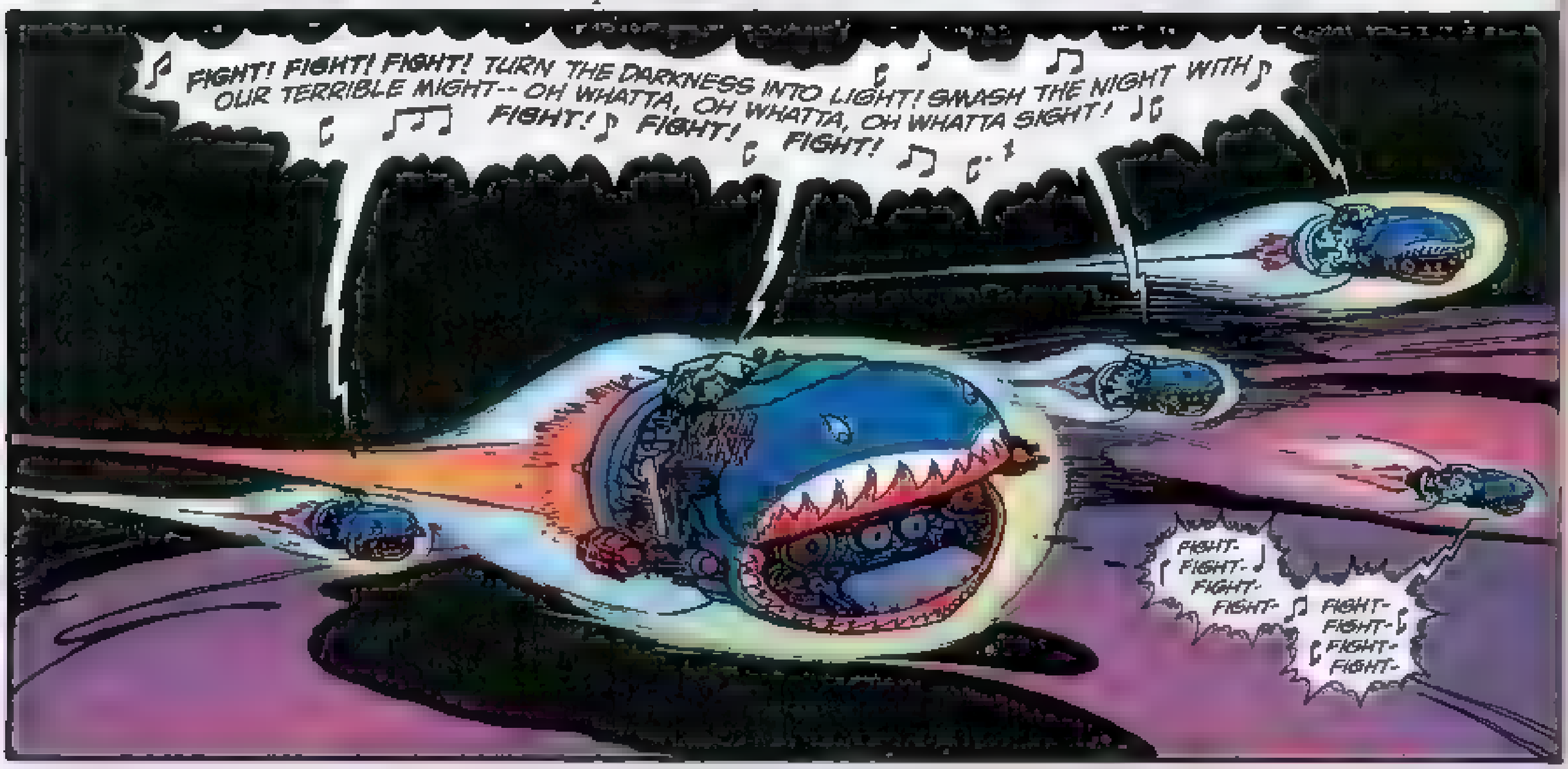
"I had the best of gunnery sergeants, my squadron was 'A' number one and my hardware was state o' the art. We're talkin' DEVASTATION! I ran my eyes across the tactical screens. there were no wallflowers in my bunch . . no one haulin' any dead wood .. our attack pattern was as tight as a paymaster's fist.

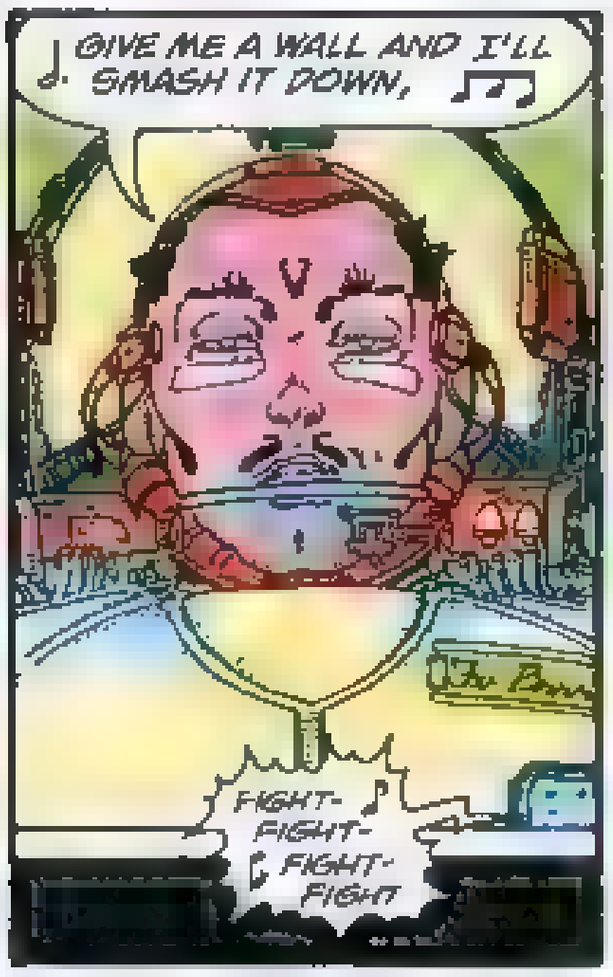
ALL SHIPS. FINGER AND AD-LIB! ASS-END CHARLIE TO ME!

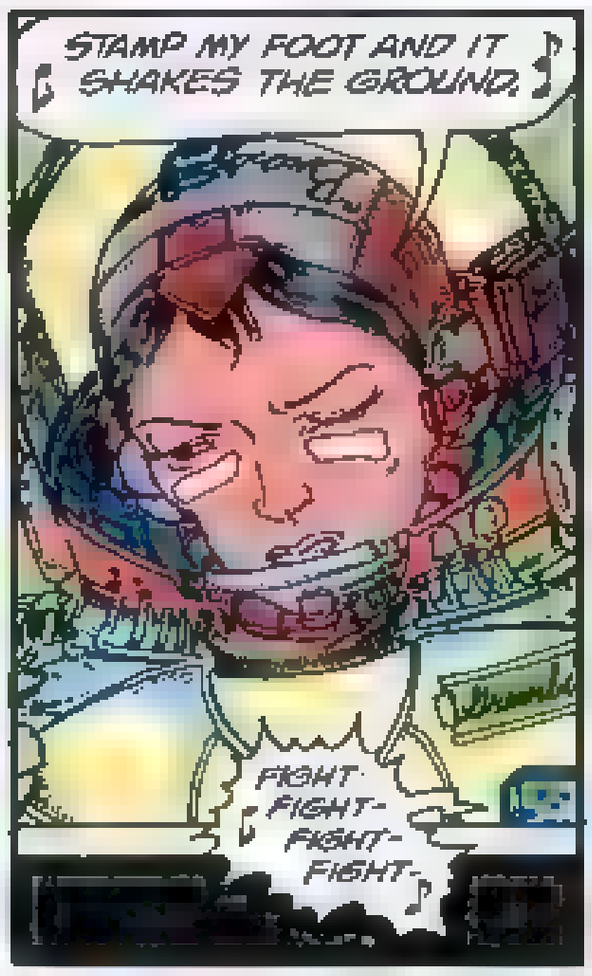
HANG TIGHT, COOKIE, WE'LL SHOW THOSE YEAST-FARTS WHAT BRIGADIERS ARE MADE OF!

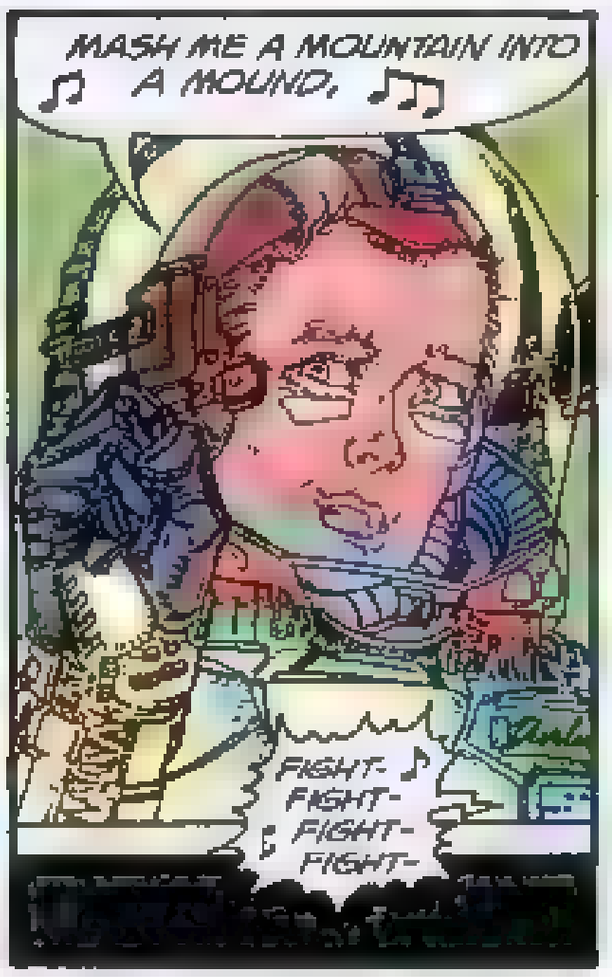
"I blinked back a tear of pride as I prepared for the first onslaught of coherent hell-fire from the Vercadian bases."

"The voices of the brave lads and lasses of Squadron 4, 21st Tactical Assault Group drifted into and were lost in the dark embrace of Mother Void as their ships shrieked into the black bowels of the Neutral Zone."


FIGHT! FIGHT! FIGHT! TURN THE DARKNESS INTO LIGHT! SMASH THE NIGHT WITH OUR TERRIBLE MIGHT-- OH WHATTA, OH WHATTA, OH WHATTA SIGHT!
FIGHT!
FIGHT!
FIGHT!
FIGHT- FIGHT- FIGHT- FIGHT-
FIGHT- FIGHT- FIGHT- FIGHT-







"How does a woman measure distance in space? Normally from point to point... how does a person measure time?

MY SCANNERS SHOW THREE BASES AT 8°, 176° AND 92° PLANE NEUTRAL

I'VE GOT SOMETHING AT 52°!

"Our goal lay just beyond deep-space radar range... but it may as well have been on the far side of the bizon galaxy as we hopscotched through a shifting moiré pattern of ionized hydrogen beams that sang beauty to the eye...

"WE HOPSCOTCHED THROUGH A SHIFTING MOIRÉ PATTERN OF HYDROGEN BEAMS THAT SANG BEAUTY TO THE EYE." THIS'LL LOOK GREAT IN MY MEMOIRS.

YEAH... WELL, DON'T WRITE 'EM NOW.

".. and whispered DEATH to the soul that knew them!"

"In the heat of battle, distance means nothing...TIME means nothing. I'm talkin' the big NAUGHT! Every ribec seems like a martron, a single martron can become several marbecs, and a MARBEC...

WHUZZA MATTER, KID? SCARED A THESE LITTLE FLASHLITE BEAMS? THEY JUST COME OUT TO SHOW US ACROSS THE ZONE!

"...well. .a MARBEC just stretches on out into ETERNITY!

THATS *ME*, GONZO.. CHOWDERHEAD...

DON'T LET 'EM KID YA, KID... THERE'S NOT *ONE* A THESE GUYS NOT WETTIN'S TROU!

OKAY, KIDS... LET'S CAN THE CHATTER!

"My own soul shrank to the size of a qua-credit as an angry red flower blossomed off the port beam...

"Someone had bought the farm. I didn't know who, and I never would."

DEALER AND WART JUST BOUGHT THE FARM...

JUMPIN' GYROS!

ALL SHIPS CANCEL AD-LIB!

STAN THE MAN AND SKINK, TAIL IN BEHIND GUNNER!

LO-BOYS TO LEFT FLANK ATTACK

POINT GROUP'LL PLAY HONEY AND DRAW 'EM UNDER V-BASE 10.

BROSSOM, GIMME FORTY R'BECS AND BITE 8...

DAMPER, TAKE 5 AND SPECS, RIGHT FLANK TO 12!

WHEN THE TABLE TURNS, WE'LL SPLIT 'N HIT 'EM LIKE A BANANA CREAM PIE!

"My lips moved in a silent prayer to the Mother as point group crawled under Vercadian Base 10, drawing their H-beams like so many Fryfromian Phlys And suddenly...

"... the Zone smiled wide...

HOLY SHIT!

"... belching bile from its great churning gut, and each brave Brigader of Point Group saw his or her face reflected in its omnivorous teeth as he or she stared grim-faced down the trembling throat of death!

GUNNER AN' SARGE JUST BOUGHT THE FARM...

"Unbeknownst to me, "Damper" and the Hi-Boys had cut out the malignant Base 5 like the cancer it was. My full attention was, at the time, primarily focused on keepin' Point Group clear of the fast-fryin' fangs of the death-dealin' droids.

My full attention proved to be worth less than a BAJAR SHILLING.

SKINK AND WEEBLE JUST BOUGHT THE FARM!

"There was a hell of a lotta real estate auctioned off in that Neutral Zone an' my kids thought they were pickin' it wholesale! To my mind, they were paying top dollar

"... they were paying with BRIGADER BLOOD!

OH MOTHER OH MOTHER OH MOTHER! STAN...!

"... I saw it comin' at 'em, but before I could say 'Stan! Claw off to Port!', Stan and "Butcher" had been reduced to a fond memory...
...and just as suddenly--"

BA-LA-AM!

"The noise was deafning as the ship was hit with wavering green light that pinned us to our seats like moths to corkboard, then bounced us about the cabin like a couple a b-b's in a tin cup.

BRU! THE COMPUTER'S OUT! YOU'LL HAVE TO GO MANUAL!

"When I was able to see ANYTHING, what I saw was a big pair'd peepers. The blast had peeled the nose like a big banana and curled it back over the deadlight so that I was sittin' there starin' into the crazy shark-eyes of 'Mama Spank'!

SONOFFA...! HOLD TIGHT, COOKIE! WE'RE GONNA BLOW OFF THE HULL!

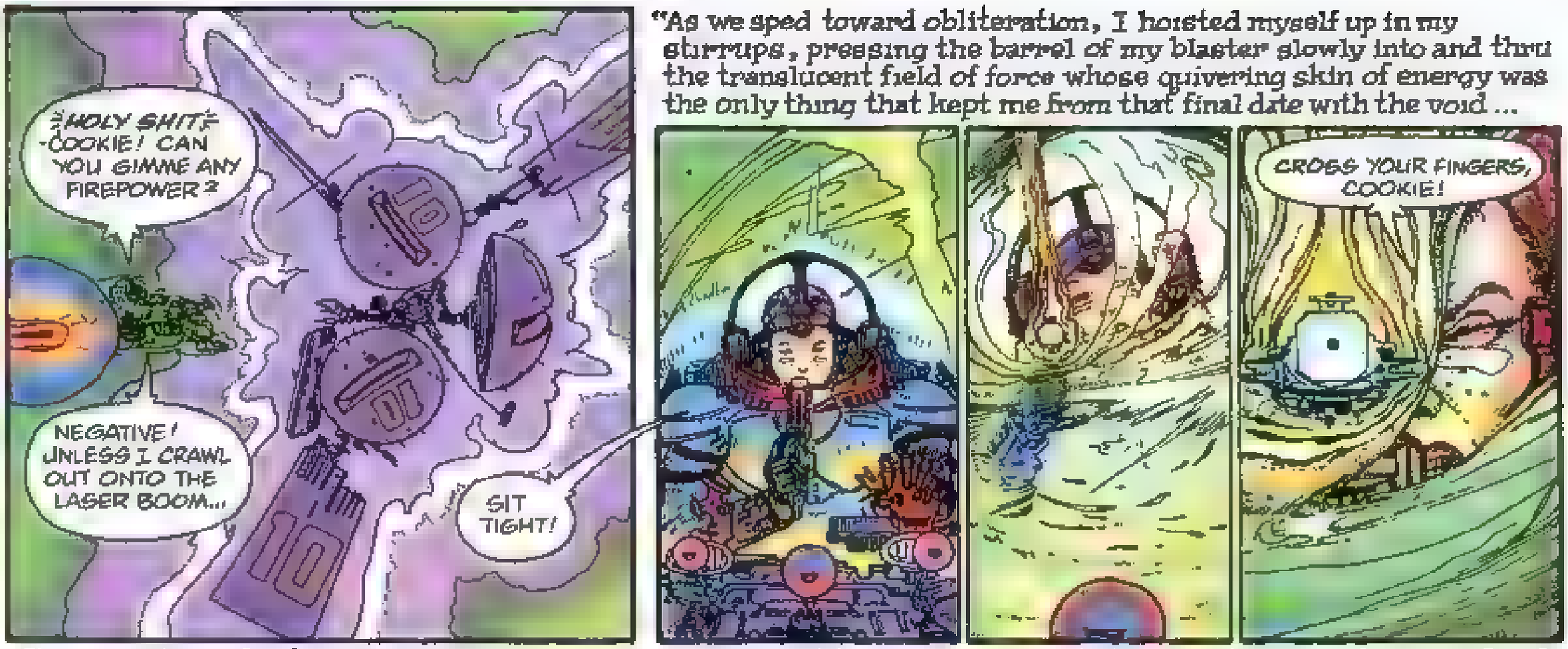
"I was flyin' blind and white-faced as a freshman on hazing day. My left hand worked quickly, priming the explosive bolts with a mind of its own, leaving the right hand free to jockey the ship.

"And just as quickly, my thumb flicked the inner hull mauntenance ejector switch, and...

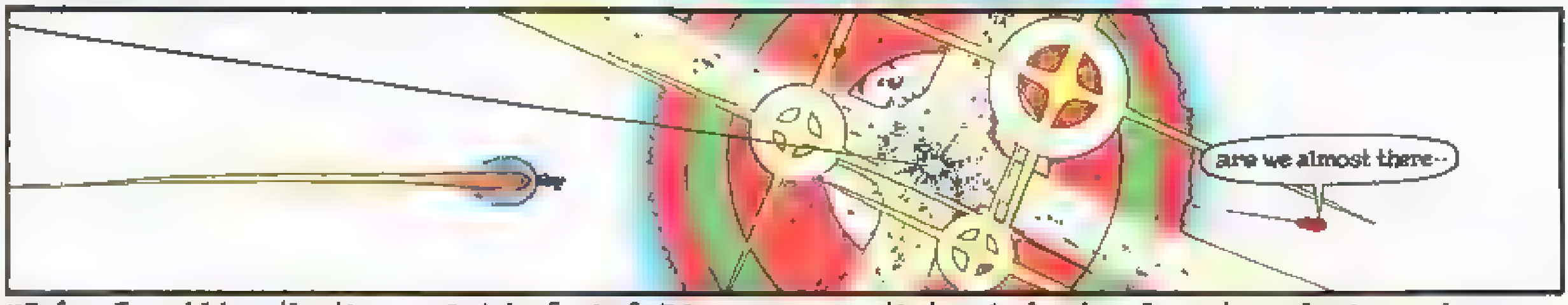
?

"...when what to my wondering eyes did appear.. ?"

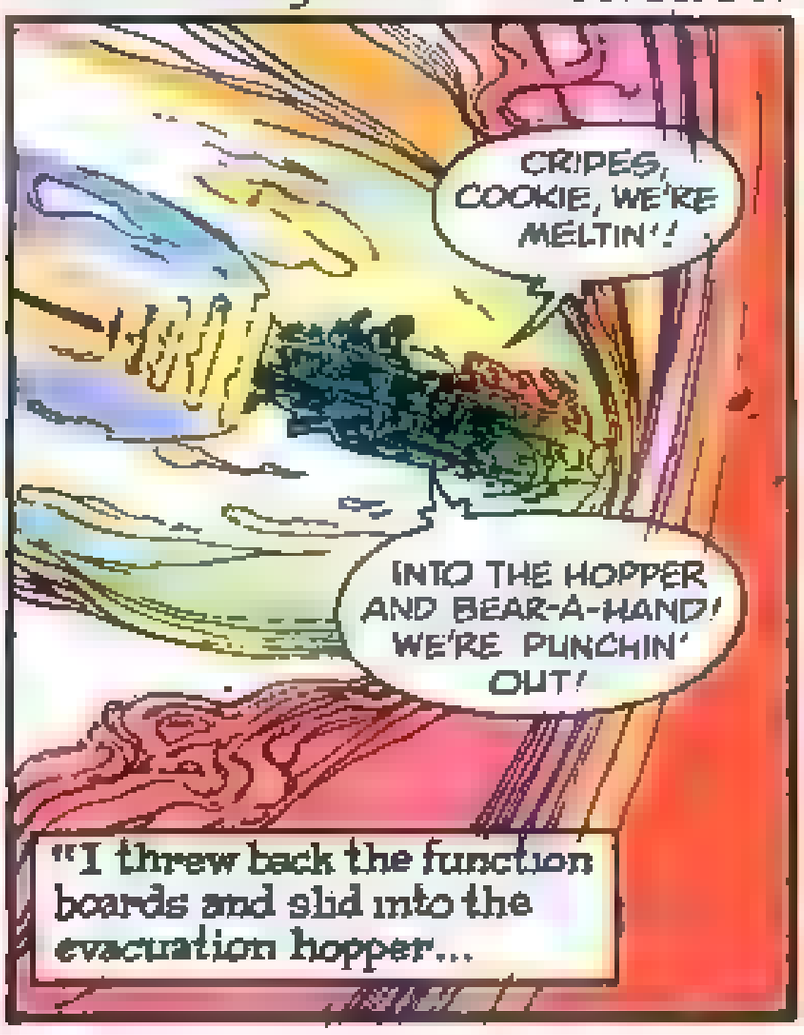
"As we sped toward obliteration, I hoisted myself up in my stirrups, pressing the barrel of my blaster slowly into and thru the translucent field of force whose quivering skin of energy was the only thing that kept me from that final date with the void ...

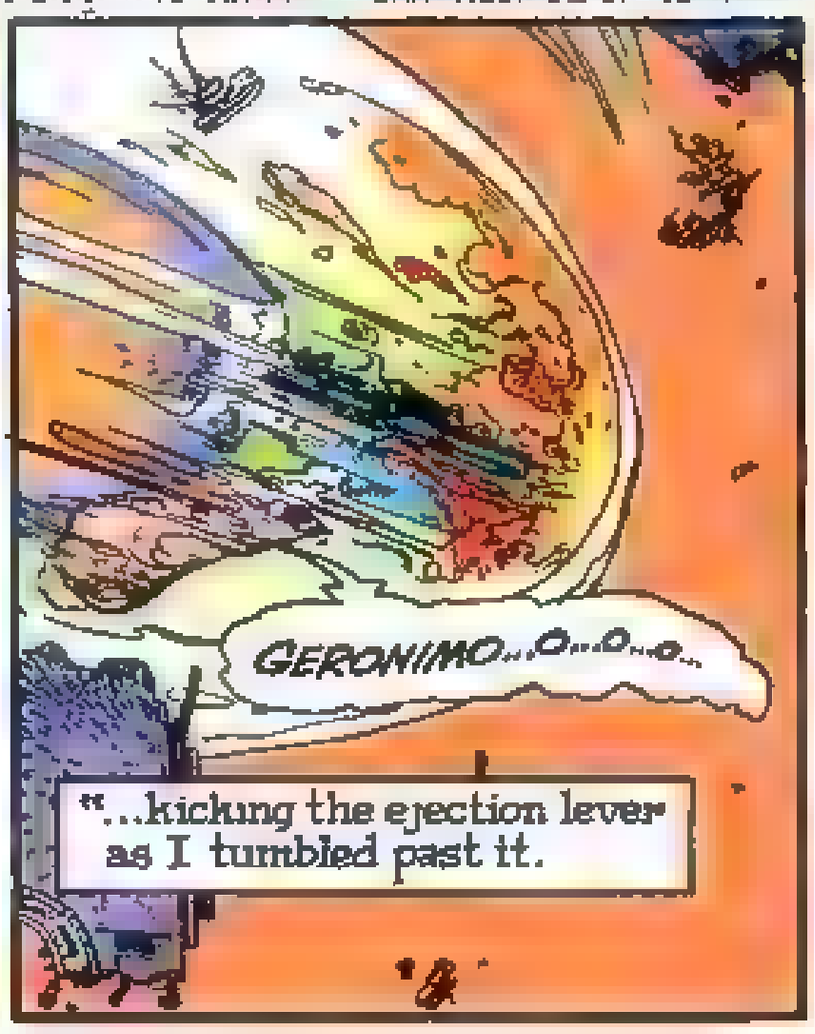

HOLY SHIT! COOKIE! CAN YOU GIMME ANY FIREPOWER?
NEGATIVE! UNLESS I CRAWL OUT ONTO THE LASER BOOM...
SIT TIGHT!
CROSS YOUR FINGERS, COOKIE!

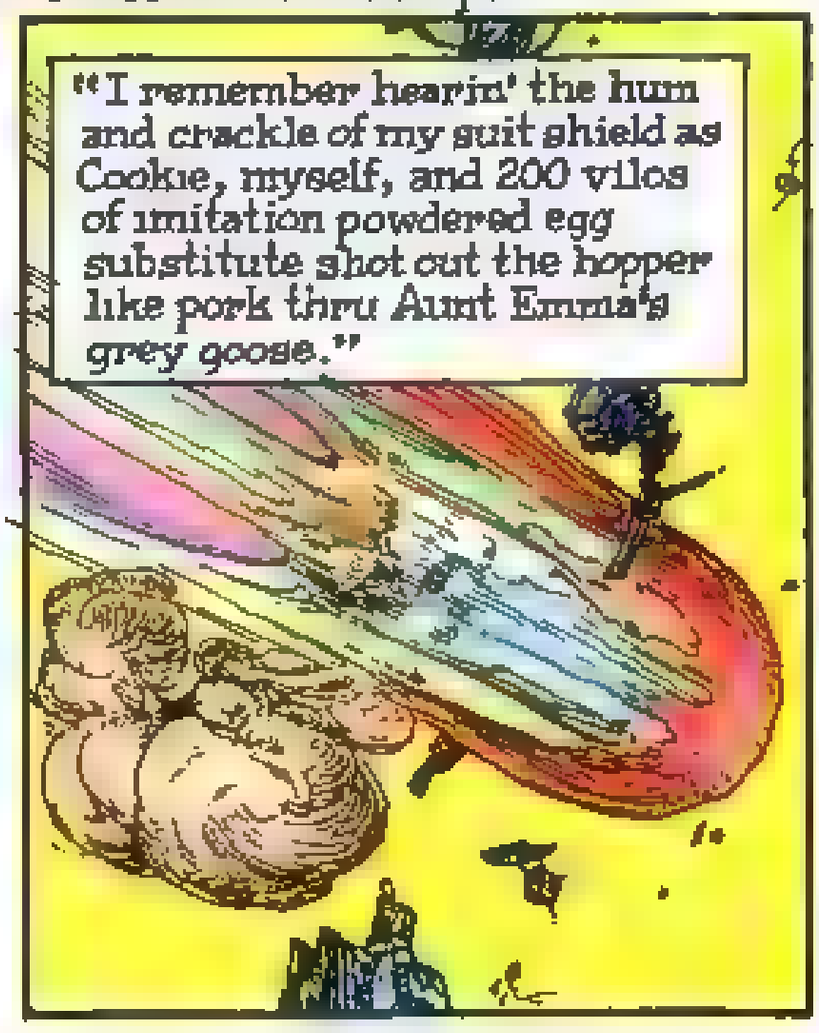
"I've never been able to explain what happened next. Suffice it to say.. I am here to tell the story... and I never fired my blaster. SOMETHING took out V-base 10... I don't know what.. perhaps I never will ..



"Before I could breathe the usual sigh of relief, I became aware that we had entered an atmospheric envelope surrounding the ex-V-base. This fact became clear to me when I noticed the condition of the ship!


CRIPES, COOKIE, WE'RE MELTIN'!
INTO THE HOPPER AND BEAR-A-HAND! WE'RE PUNCHIN' OUT!
"I threw back the function boards and slid into the evacuation hopper...




"I remember hearin' the hum and crackle of my suit shield as Cookie, myself, and 200 vilos of imitation powdered egg substitute shot out the hopper like pork thru Aunt Emma's grey goose."

"... AND, I might add, not a ribec too soon!

WHU HAPPENED?

"The virulent Vercadians, none too happy about Base 10 bein' neutralized, had let go a quasar beam from Base 9 an' reduced Mama Spank to a cloud of dust an' debris no bigger'n a Phrybens sneeze...

"There was a second beam...

SHIT.

"...an' Cookie an' myself found ourselves sizzlin' smack-dab in the middle of a 200-vilo ball a fryin' imitation powdered egg substitute.

"As we were batted about by the following barrage of beams like krystal braids on a Krabian belly-dancer's hips, I was surprised to hear the familiar bleeping tones of my in suit communicator... an', shortly after, the sweetest words these ole ears have heard to this malton-unit!

POK

POK

POK

POW

BLEEP.

YOU ARE NOW LEAVING NEUTRAL ZONE B RETURN AT YOUR OWN RISK!

"What happened next was irony run amok... for where did our makeshift ship o' synthetic egg substitute choose, out of every floating hunk of what-not in the ever-lovin' void...?

"You guessed it! PORT-O-BOY 16!"

"We put a crater in that thing the size of a small swimmin' pool not six BANLONS from St. Arnold's Pep Band!

"The second thing we saw after wipin' the egg off our vizors... (the first bein' the dumb-struck faces of the St. Arnold's Pep Band)...

"...was a giant-sized vi-screen loomin' over us, containin' the giant-sized image of Mother Amy Simple, head honcho of The Cosmic Veil, Cloistered Order of the Goddess Uncaring!

WE ARE NOT AMUSED... TO ERR IS HUMAN, BUT *THIS!* ...THIS WAS NAUGHTY...

...A NO-NO OF THE *BRAVEST* SORT... THE SISTERHOOD FEELS THAT TO *LET* THIS *ACTION*... THE DE*LIBERATE* DISRUPTION OF *PIOUS* SISTERS PURSUING THEIR GODESS-GIVEN *RIGHT* OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ... TO LET *THIS* GO UNPUNISHED WOULD BE GIVING THE *GREEN LIGHT* TO FUTURE INFRACTIONS OF OUR TREATY.

IN VIEW OF THIS... WE HAVE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW OUR *HANDSOME* SEMI-CYCLE GIFT OF 20,000 MEGACREDITS TO THE AMERCADIAN SPACE ACADEMY.

"It would seem that Mother 'A' had a crimp in her craw due to the fact that the Sisterhood had one of its cosmic hen-coops tucked back in the Neutral Zone, and the commotion caused by Squadron 4's collision with the forces of chaos had disturbed her meditory vibrations.

"This was nothing, however, when compared with the enraged countenance of General "Typhoon" Weatheral appeared shortly thereafter lookin' as if somethin' was gonna rupture."

GRAB 'EM!

WHO? US?

"The next few marbecs were a nightmare. Little did I suspect that I was to play the pawn in a drama of deception that made a travesty of justice and a mockery of the words 'fair play'.

I'LL BE OUTA HERE IN NO TIME! YOU'RE TALKIN' TO A GAL THAT KNOWS THE MEANIN' OF THE WORDS "BE PREPARED"!

I GOT IT ALL ON RECORD! RIGHT ON THE OLE TAPE-EROO!

HA! THEY'LL EAT THEIR--

"Suffice it to say that yours truly took the brunt of the Brigade Brass's not so righteous wrath.

WHAT!?

"And the tape? The tape was not admitted as evidence They should'a killed me. They didn't. I was humiliated, cashiered, broken from the ranks.

RRIP POP POP POP POP

SNAP SNAP

PLUK PLUK PLUK

"good 'till the last drop"

"They marched me out of the courtroom

"'Cookie' got off with a mere 90 cycles a' K P.

".. down deep into and through the dank gray back corridors of Brigade Headquarters. I hung my head, so filled was I with shame and burning rage and then, by yet another foul turn of fate, found myself face to face with the last guy in Amercadia I wanted to run into at this moment."

GEE WHIZ! HI BRU. WHO'RE YOUR FRIENDS?

GOT BAD NEWS FOR YA DWAIN...

ER ..THAT'S *DWANNYLIN.*

TONIGHT'S NO GO. I'M GONNA HAFTA BREAK OUR DATE. SORRY KID.

GOLLY... BUT BRU...? IT'S THE *PROM*...

SORRY, KID... I'M SHIPPIN' OUT.

IT'S A GREAT BIG GALAXY OUT THERE, KID, AN' I'M GONNA GRAB MY PIECE OF IT.

...I'M MARRIED TO THE BRIGADE, K.D... I GOTTA GO WHERE NO WOMAN HAS EVER GONE BEFORE TWO SHUTTLES PASSIN' IN THE VOID... THAT'S WHAT WE WERE KID. AND SOME UN'T, DWAIN, YOU'LL LOOK OUT AT THOSE CRAZY STARS...

PAT TAT

"So shoot me, I lied. I couldn't tell him the truth..."

...AND YOU'LL REMEMBER.

LATER, DWAIN.

SLAM!

BRU!

...THAT'S DWANDYUN.

I was a scapegoat, a pariah, a team player screwed by the team.

As I turned my gaze away from all I held dear and looked steadily at my own uncertain future, the faces of those brave Brigaders of Squadron Four seemed to beckon me from the vast vi-screen of Eternity.

They were not on my conscience, for I had done what I had to do.

They remained a fond memory, for they had done the best they could

THE VALIANT WHO DIED :

LT JOHNNY "SPRACKER" LATCHSKY • THE WART • LT MALCOLM SOKOL "TRUEHEART" "AZ BUCKLEY" O'TOOLE • SGT EZRA "PROPHET" J.

LT STANLEY "NOTHING NE" "SAW 'EM RUN" • SGT BELLA "BIG CHIEF" BLOK • SGT HRITYH2 TWISTER VYN

LT JETERIT "SPUNK" MACGYTH • SGT ZEN "WEEBLE" FEATHERTREADER • LT MILDRED "GONGO" THELVBO • SGT HELGA "BONE CRUSHER" RAFI

LT DECORE "DANCER" DARLING • SGT ED "BRUISER" MCCRUE • LT LOTUS "BLOSSOM" GREENBERG • SGT SOOZIE "THE WITCH" OAKWOMAN

LT BOLYNE "SPEAKER" UM DREE • SGT G D "GOOFY" FRA-SER • LT LEROY "ROCKET" FU BERRAGTH • SGT DAVE "DILLY" DAILY

LT ASHLEY "SMOKEY" WILKES • SGT WUNDRA "DOODLE" BUGG • LT RUTH "RUTHLESS" XO • SGT BALTHAZAR "THE B" LEE

LT TOM "GUNNER" BROWN • SGT THOM "SARGE" BROWN

SHIF!

EXCERPTED FROM THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY:

"I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW 'CAUSE I GET BETTER-LOOKIN' EVERY MALTON-UNIT"

The Life and Times of Brucilla "The Muscle": Woman of War -- Lucky in Love

CYCLE 134
ANARCHERA

NEUTRAL ZONE EIGHT

"HOME MOVIES"

"THE PRIMARY THING WHEN YOU TAKE YOUR SWORD IN YOUR HANDS IS YOUR INTENTION TO CUT THE ENEMY, WHATEVER THE MEANS. WHENEVER YOU PARRY, HIT, SPRING, STRIKE OR TOUCH THE ENEMY'S CUTTING SWORD, YOU MUST CUT THE ENEMY IN THE SAME MOVEMENT. IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ATTAIN THIS." -- MIYAMOTO MUSASHI, A BOOK OF FIVE RINGS

"MY BIRTHRIGHT! MY BIRTHRIGHT! GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!" SHE WROTE IN HER DIARY. 'BUT FOR THAT FLASH OF THE KNIFE THAT SENT HIM DOWN THE PATH TOWARD HIS DESTINY, AND ME DOWN ANOTHER PATH, HE COULD HAVE BEEN ME AND I HIM.' WHAT THE WRITER DID NOT KNOW WAS THAT WHILE HER BROTHER WOULD SEEK ON,/ TO REGAIN SHE WOULD DO AND DO AND DO"
--OF MICE AND MOVERS
RIPPLES IN THE COSMIC POND
GLORIANNA OF PHOEBUS

SO, MAMA?

...BETTER THAN EXPECTED...

...AS ALWAYS, MY LITTLE MAMA SAN

CYCLE 140
ANARCHERA

LANDING BAY SEVENTEEN • RECREATION STATION 97

MINER ONE-NINER: YOU'RE GO FOR SOFT LANDING TEN RIBELS AND COUNTING, OVER...

ROGER-ROONY, BAY 17; OVER...

MINER ONE-NINER: WE'VE GOT PRIORITY REQUEST TO ASSAY ASTEROID FOR TRACE MINERALS, OVER...

NEGATORY ON PRIORITY, BAY 17... ASTEROID PURE PLATINUM, 600 MEGA-MILOS. REQUEST OPEN-MARKET BIDDING, OVER...

600 MEGA-MILOS?! WHAAA--

I. "THE MOTHER IS PARADOX: EVER-PRESENT AND NEVER THERE WHEN YOU NEED HER."
--FIRST TENET OF THE COSMIC VEIL, CLOISTERED ORDER OF THE GODDESS UNCARING

III. "THE MOTHER IS PARADOX. EVER-PRESENT AND NEVER THERE WHEN YOU NEED HER."
--THIRD TENET OF THE DAUGHTERS OF THE DROWNING ISIS. A FICTIONAL RELIGION INTRODUCED IN THE BEST-SELLING *MIND SPIDERS FROM THE PLANET XENON* BY HUGO AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR RONNIE LEE ELLIS

KRAKOOM

SMASH

CRUMBLE

THUD

SHIT.

MOTHER'S LITTLE HELPERS

MAMMYGRAM™
TO: MAMA SAN
FROM: SISTER MARYERINYE, C.V., M.L.H.
SISTER LUCY QUANTA, C.V., M.L.H.
RE: DISAPPEARANCE AND POSSIBLE ABDUCTION OF GALACTIC GIRL GUIDES FROM RECREATION STATION 97...

"WHY DON'T SOMETHING WITH A MIND OF ITS OWN?"

BARGAIN

BARGAIN BLISS

AFTER LOSING SUBJECT GROUP [WING 437, MOULTING] FOR THE 3RD TIME IN AS MANY UNITS, WE HAPPEN ONTO THEM QUITE BY CHANCE.

POSITION: LEVEL BLUE HEAVEN

NEAR: TEMPTATION CLOISTER

SUBJECT GROUP, IN TYPICAL 3G FASHION, APPEARS TO BE ENGAGED IN PRIMARY STAGE S.C.A.M.

FLUX

SPIC-N-A-SPANDEX CREW REPORT TO BLUE HEAVEN

REMOVAL OF 600 M.M. PLAT. AST. AND RESULTING DEBRIS

AT PRECISELY M13, UNIT 22, GUIDES ENCOUNTER "BABY SISTER" RECRUITING MODULES...

HEAR THAT?

YEAH, PLATINUM!

GELT! MONEY! MACOY!

BOND YOUR VIBES IN THE BUMPKIN BELT® BEAM INTO THE NITELIFE+WHITELITES OF REC STA -97- TEST YOUR METAL AT TEMPTATION CLOISTER

APPLY WITH THIS PROXY

OVER LOADED?
OVER ANXIOUS?
OVER EXTENDED?
JOIN OUR
COSMIC VEIL
CLOISTERED ORDER OF THE GODESS UNCARING
RELAX AND MEDITATE IN THE PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE OF
COMET CLOISTER!

BOND YOUR VIBES IN THE BUMPKIN BELT® BEAM INTO THE NITELIFE+WHITELITES OF REC STA -97- TEST YOUR METAL AT TEMPTATION CLOISTER

APPLY WITH THIS PROXY

EXHIBIT A

EXHIBIT B

EXHIBIT C

...SEE PHOTO EXHIBIT BA.

CLOISTERED ORDER OF THE GODDESS UNCARING WELCOMES YOU TO THE MOST FAMOUS AND VERY OUTTHERE PLACE ANY

PRINT YOUR NAME ...
YOUR NUMBER
YOUR SPECIES
YOUR SUBSPECIES

CLOISTERED ORDER GODDESS UNCARED WELCOMES YOU TO MOST FAMOUS AND OUTTHERE PLACE AN WHERE NEAR THIS PL SO THIS MUST BE TH RIGHT

UPON COMPLETION OF INFO TRANSFER MODULES DISENGAGE, PROCEED DOWN RIGHT CORRIDOR TOWARD DISTRIBUTION SECTOR 10/4: "THE GUTTERS". GUIDES IN PURSUIT.

OUR ATTEMPT TO FOLLOW IS IMPEDED BY ACCELERATING "FLOTSAM" IN PROCESS OF ELUDING REC/POLS.

GET THE HELL OUTA MY WAY!

WE RECOVER AND PROCEED TOWARD CORRIDOR TO INVESTIGATE SOUNDS WHICH WE INTERPRET AS RECRUITING MODULES ENGAGED IN "RESIST THE DEVIL" DEFENSE MODE. WE ASSUME TERMINATION OF GIRL GUIDE GROUP.

BOOP

KBAM! KRASH! BAP! PONK PONK PONK!

PING PING PING PONG

BOOP BOOP BOOPING!

ASSUMPTION CONFIRMED. BABY SISTERS REENGAGE PRIMARY FUNCTION RESUME... SHIT...! BACK UP...

CORRECTION: GUIDES HAVE CUT & RUN
CONCLUSION: MISSION ABORTED
CAUSE: AGENT ERROR

RIDING YOUR VIBES IN THE BUMPKIN BELT FAM INTO THE WHITELITES

97 AL

COMMENT:
THE GUIDES TRAINING IS VERY EFFECTIVE. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ASCERTAIN AT THIS TIME WHETHER THE DISAPPEARANCES ARE THE WORK OF SOME OUTSIDE AGENT OR SOME UNKNOWN PLAN OF THE GUIDES THEMSELVES. END REPORT.

CYCLE 140
ANARCHERA

SECTION W3 LEVEL 42
THE VALE OF TIERS
REC STATION 97

"I ATE A WHOLE FUNNEL CAKE..."

"WHAT YOU DO AT GUN-POINT WILL DEPEND ON BOTH YOUR BASIC NATURE AND THE SPEED OF THE BULLET WHERE YOU LAND AFTER THE JUMP IS 'WHERE YOU ARE'! 'WHERE YOU ARE' IS THE ONLY STARTING POINT YOU HAVE FOR ANY ACT OF FREE WILL. YOU CAN SEE THE CONNECTION."

FROM CONVERSATIONS WITH THE GREAT MOTHER BY BRONWYN, FIFTH LEVEL SISTER OF THE COSMIC VEIL, CLOISTERED ORDER OF THE GODDESS UNCARING

YOU GOT IT... PERSONUS/EX/ MAHKINA, IN THE FLESH...OR WHAT'S PASSING FOR IT. NASTY COLOR SCHEME.

HEY! WHAT DUZ A GAL HAVE TO DO TO GETTA *DRINK* AROUND THIS HOLE? *WAITER!*

HEY! THAS OKAY, TAKE YOUR TIME .. *PLEEZE* ...I GOT ALL *CYCLE.*

TOOK ME A FULL RIGON TO PRY LOOSE THE DIAMONDS.

SET ME UP AGAIN, HARRY I'M GOOD FOR IT.

HEY! *DROID!*

GET HER SOME OIL SOMEBODY, I THINK SHE'S *RUSTIN'* OVER THERE.

HEY! THAT REMINDS ME...

...I GOTTA GREAT NEW JOKE, I'M TALK N' *FUNNY,* WHATTABOUT IT?

OKAY, HERE GOES..

WHAT DO YOU GET IF YOU CROSS A *DROMO-RUSTLER* WITH A *PLEASURE DROID?*

HUH? ;CHORTLE;

"THE PLEASURES OF THE IDLE CLASS, MORE POISONOUS THAN NOXIOUS GAS." CHEERS!

GLUK!

YOU'RE GONNA *LOVE* IT...

YOU GET...

...THIS *KILLS* ME...

YOU GET A DROMO-RUSTLER WITH AN ASS-HOLE *THIS BIG!*

HEH ..HEH... HEH...

OKAY, OKAY, I CAN TAKE A HINT

"DEADLIER BY FAR THAN KREZONIAN GAS." ... HO! SPEAKING OF UNNERVING EXPERIENCES...

OHHHH

YEAH, I KNOW. THIS IS BETWEEN THE TWO OF US..

PAF

GRTZ

GEEZE, BUDDY!

DROPPED HIS SENSE OF HUMOR IN THE LAST GRAVITY WELL! PUS BLTT

HEY, *ANDY!* SET ME UP AGAIN!

GEEZE!

A *LINE* OF PLEASURE DROIDS!

HEH ..HEH.. WHAT'S *LONG, PINK,* HOT TO TROT AND HAS AN I.Q. OF *THREE?*

THANKS, KID, ABOUT TIME.. I BEEN ALL OVER THE GALAXY AN' I SWEAR, I NEVER SEEN *NOTHIN'* LIKE YOU!

JUST AS I HIT THE RELEASE, I *THOUGHT*... I WAS A MITE DISORIENTED, YOU UNDERSTAND...

DON'T GIVE *ME* THE COOL SUPERIOR ACT. I GOT YOUR NUMBER, KID.

HEY!

GET IT?

I GOT YOUR *NUMBER?*

ANDROID? NUMBER?

PLEASURE *DROID? HOT NUMBER?*

GEEZE, BUDDY,

LET ME GET OUT OF THE WAY OF YOUR *ELBOW* HERE...

NAW... THAT'S OKAY,

I *ENJOY* BUSTED RIBS..

HEY!

...SHIT...

CAN'T EVEN HAVE A DRINK IN PEACE...

SPEAKIN' A *PIECES!*

...OKAY... I HEARD ONE OF 'EM YELL "WAIT".

WHADYA GET IF YOU CROSS A PHRYBYN W.TH A *PLEASURE DROID*?

WHAT?

PAF

GRTZ

...I'VE BEEN A LITTLE DOWN IN THE DUMPS ABOUT THAT. POOR CHUMPS. HERE'S TO WINKYN, BLINKYN AND NOD! MAY THEY FIND... HAVE FOUND... WHAT THEY WERE LOOKING FOR. WHATEVER THE BOOT IT WAS.

...A PHRYBYN WITH A VAT-GROWN FACE AND AN I.Q. OF *THREE!*

WHAZZA MATTER, *STUD*? YOU NEVER SEEN A GOOD-LOOKIN' WOMAN BEFORE?

WELL, KEEP YOUR *PECKER* IN YOUR *PANTS*, I'M NOT INTERESTED!

...OH, *YEAH*!

... SAME TO *YOU*, JACK!

LISTEN,

I TRAVELED THE GALAXY... *DONE, BEEN, SEEN* EVERYTHING THERE IS TO SEE AND I'VE RUN INTO SOME BOOTIN-*STUPID* CUBS-O'-CURS BUT I *NEVER* RUN INTO AN *UGLIER* NEUTER-BOOTER THAN...

HEY...

EASY...

DOWN BOY!...

A MERE JEST! HEH... HEH...

CRATER FACE..

HEY, HARRY! WHOOZE THE MOUTH?

THIS IS THE F RST AR'N'AR I'VE HAD IN THREE RIGONS! I'M *ALLOWED!*

AM I *RIGHT*?

HEY!

I'M *DEHYDRATIN'* OVER HERE! SHAKE YOUR CIRCUITS AN' SHIFT GEARS ON OVER HERE BEFORE THAT *ASS* LOCKS ON YOU!

HEY!

ANYBODY EVER HEAR ABOUT THE MORE THAN USUALLY *BUILT* PLEASURE DROID?

I'M TALKIN' *GUT-BUSTER!!!*

HOHOHOHO!

THEY GAVE HER AN ORDER TO *"HAUL-ASS"* AN' IT TOOK HER *THREE* TRIPS!

THREE TRIPS! HEY! HEY!

THERE WERE THESE...

HEY! YOU WITH THE MOUTH IN HYPERDRIVE! MUFFLE YOUR JETS!

...TWO ANDROMEDICONES AND... HUH? ... DID I *HEAR* SOMETHIN'?

WUZ THAT A SMART REMARK OR JUST A *LITTLE MOUSEY* FARTIN' IN THE VOID? I *WONDER* WHAT THAT COULDA BEEN?

THE LAST TIME I HEARD A VOICE LIKE THAT, IT WAS WHISTLIN' OUTOFA *PIG'S* REAR!

OINK
OINK

MUFFLE THE JETS...

MUFFLE...?

OKAY! JETS *MUFFLED*, DAMPER STORED AND LOCKED, HATCHES BATTENED, ALL TELL-TALES *IN* THE GREEN!

WHAT'LL IT *BE*, CAP? THIS ONE'S ON *ME!*

MAKE THAT A DOUBLE DEATH-COMMANDO WITH A MEGATONIC CHASER.

JUST WHAT I HAD IN MIND! I CAN SEE YOU'RE A LADY WHO *KNOWS* HOW TO HAVE A GOOD TIME! ...UH... MAKE MINE A TRIPLE!

YOU GOT GUTS, KID.

KIND WORDS... *HEY*... LET ME INTRODUCE MYSELF... THE NAME'S *BRUCILLA*, ALSO KNOWN AS "*THE MUSCLE!*" WHAT'S YOUR HANDLE, CAP?

GALATIA NINE, FREELANCE FIGHTER ...PLEEZED TA MEET YA!

THE PLEASURE, I AM *QUICK* TO ASSURE YOU, IS ALL MINE. HEY! *GREAT* OUTFIT! LOVE THE SPIKES ...*VERY* DANGEROUS.

HE-E-E-Y... CHECK IT *OUT*... THERE'S A MAN WHO *KNOWS* HOW TO FILL A PRESSURE SUIT... WHATSAY WE MOSEY OVER... MAYBE HE'S GOT A FRIEND?

I HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN BOOT AROUND THE PEENY PALACES WITH A VACUUM-SKULLED, SINGLE-STAGED BUBBLE HOPPER! AND *YOU* LOOK LIKE A WOMON WHO'D RATHER FIGHT THAN BITE YOURSELF.

I'VE GOT A GOOD BERTH FOR A STRONG-ARMED, LEVEL-HEADED HUSTLER WHO'S SEEN A BIT OF THE GALAXY!

WHAT'S THE FARE?

DOWN THE HATCH BEFORE THEY BLOW A HOLE IN THE BAR.

I ALWAYS SAVE THE CHASER 'TIL AFTER THE KICK

THERE'S A MAN WHO *KNOWS* HOW TO MAKE A LADY SMILE!

COMMON, HANSOME, WANNA GET LUCKY?

WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?

BRU, MEET HARRY PALMER.

HEY, HARRY! HARRY PALMER? HARRY PALM-ER! HEH-HEH-HEH

...OH... GET IT?

HAIRY PALM?

SO WHAZ IT GONNA BE?

RZZZ?

HUH?

PLAYIN' GOOSY-GANDER THRU THE ASTEROID BELT'S NO JOB FOR AN EX-BRIGADER!

BRIGADE? HOW DID YOU...

COM'ON, K.D! HOT GUNS, HOT GUNS, THREE SQUARES A DAY AND A CHANCE TO MOVE UP IN THE RANKS!

CLOSE RANKED WE STAND WITH ARMS OF GOLD, NEATH BANNERS BLUE OF HUE... ♪

NERF?

YEAH, KID, TRUE BLUE -- WHADDYA SAY? PLENNY OF WORK FOR A HOT TRIGGER FINGER ABOARD THE HARPY...

♪ THE CHILDRED OF EARTH'S FINEST MOLD, CLEAR-EYED, BRAVE HEARTS AND TRUE!! ♪

=gnif=

CLEAR-EYED?

I GOTTA GO PAWN A WATCH, HARRY TAKE CARE OF BRUNH'LDA HERE T'LL I GET BACK...

♩ AMERCA-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-DIA! THE HOMELESS SING YOUR HYMN...! ♫

MOTHER, MY HEAD...

♪ AMERCA-A-A-A-A-A-A-DIA! BRIGHT JEWEL NEVER DIMMED! ♪

SNIFF

...BASTARDS.

I'LL JUST RING UP THOSE DRINKS ON YOUR TAB, GALATIA

TAB? WHUZZAT... I'M BUYIN' THE DRINKS, I SAID. HELL, I'M PAYIN' THE TAB, TOO C'MON .. ADD 'EM UP! THE WORKS! BRUCILLA'S PAYIN' THE FREIGHT!

IF YOU SAY SO... CATCH YA LATER, HARRY.

♪ ♫ ♪ CH

GIRT

BRAWL!

I RECONSIDERED YOUR MOST KIND OFFER, CAP!

UH... GLAD TO HAVE YOU ABOARD, BRU

OH... UH... CAP? I FEEL I SHOULD SAY THAT YOU NEGLECTED TO MENTION THAT YOU BEEN RUNNIN' UP THAT TAB FOR THE PAST SIX CYCLES...

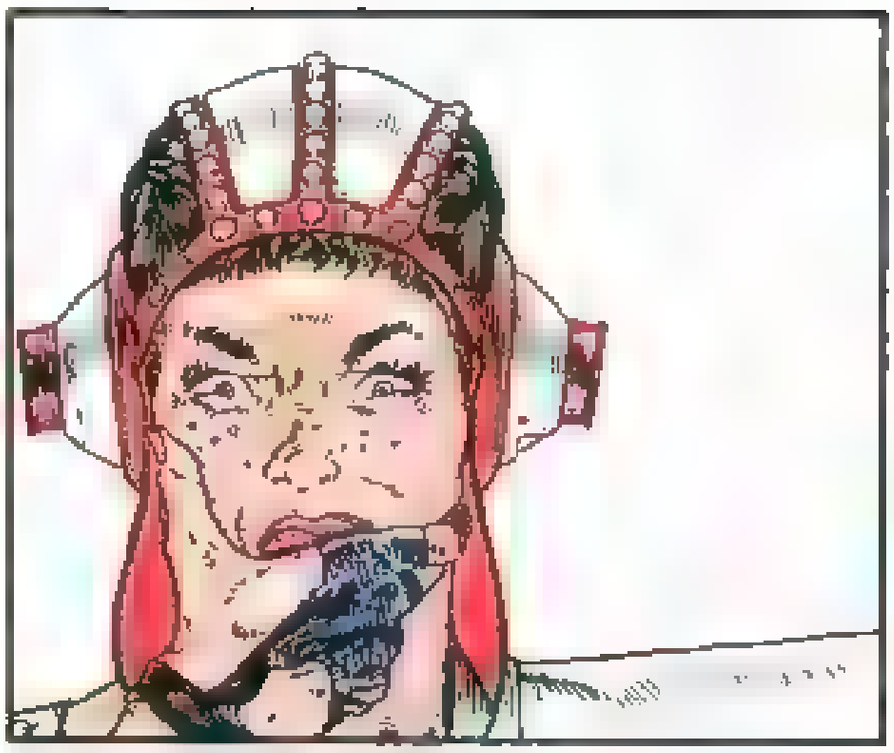
YOU NEGLECTED TO ASK.

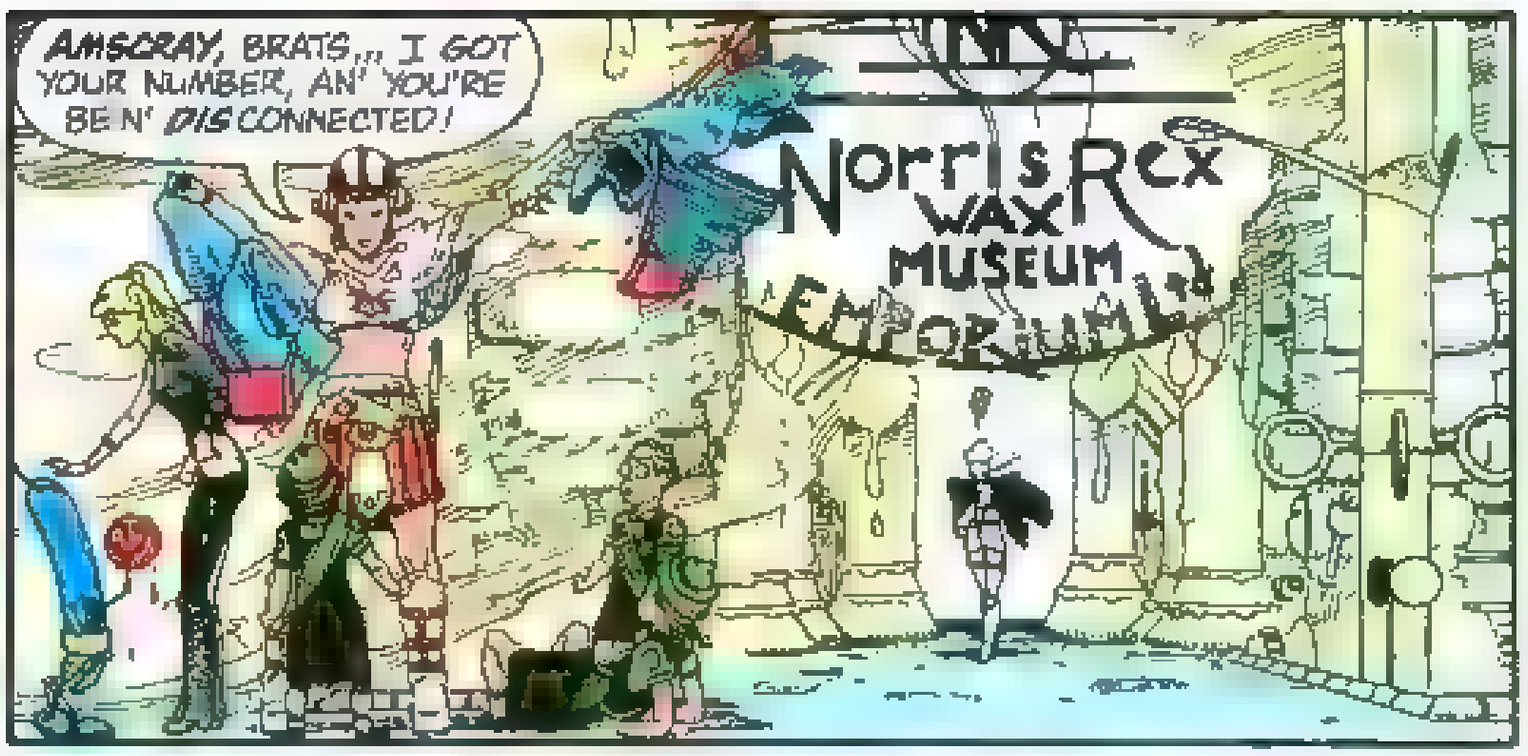
TOUCHÉ, CAP... YOU GOTTA POINT THERE... AN I HOPE YOU ALSO HAVE SOME CREDITS, CAUSE YOUR BAR TAB HAS BUSTED BRUCILLA FLATTER THAN A KANSAS KORNKAKE.

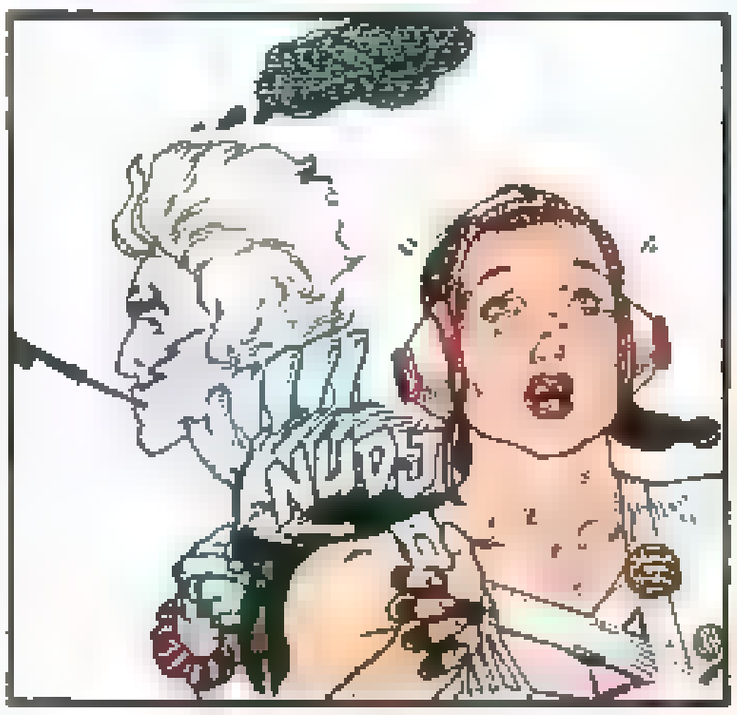
CREDITS? DID I HEAR YOU SAY CREDITS? I GOTTA DEAL YOU CAN'T BEAT

SAY WHAT?

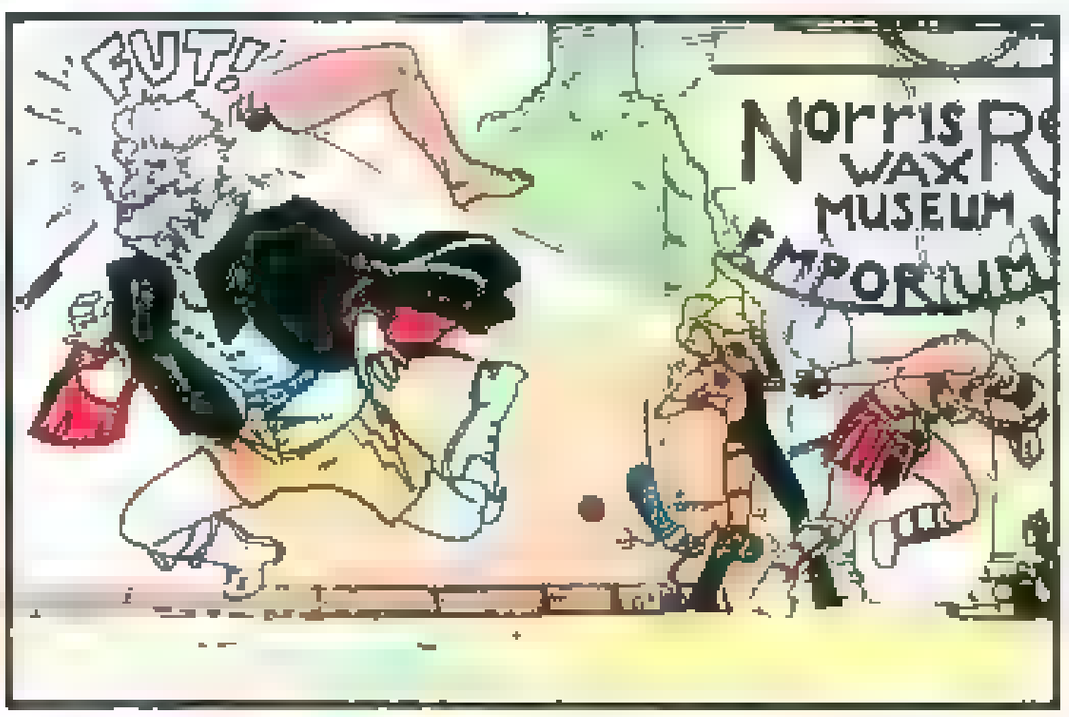
IN A WORD... PLATINUM.

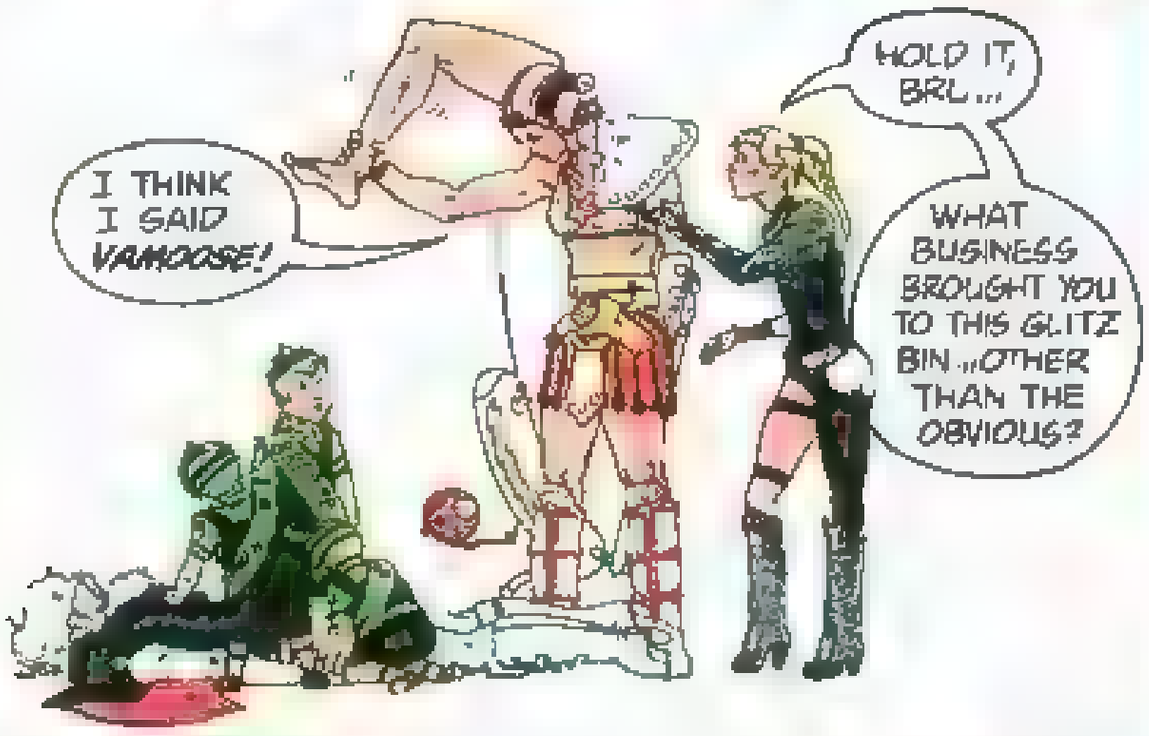


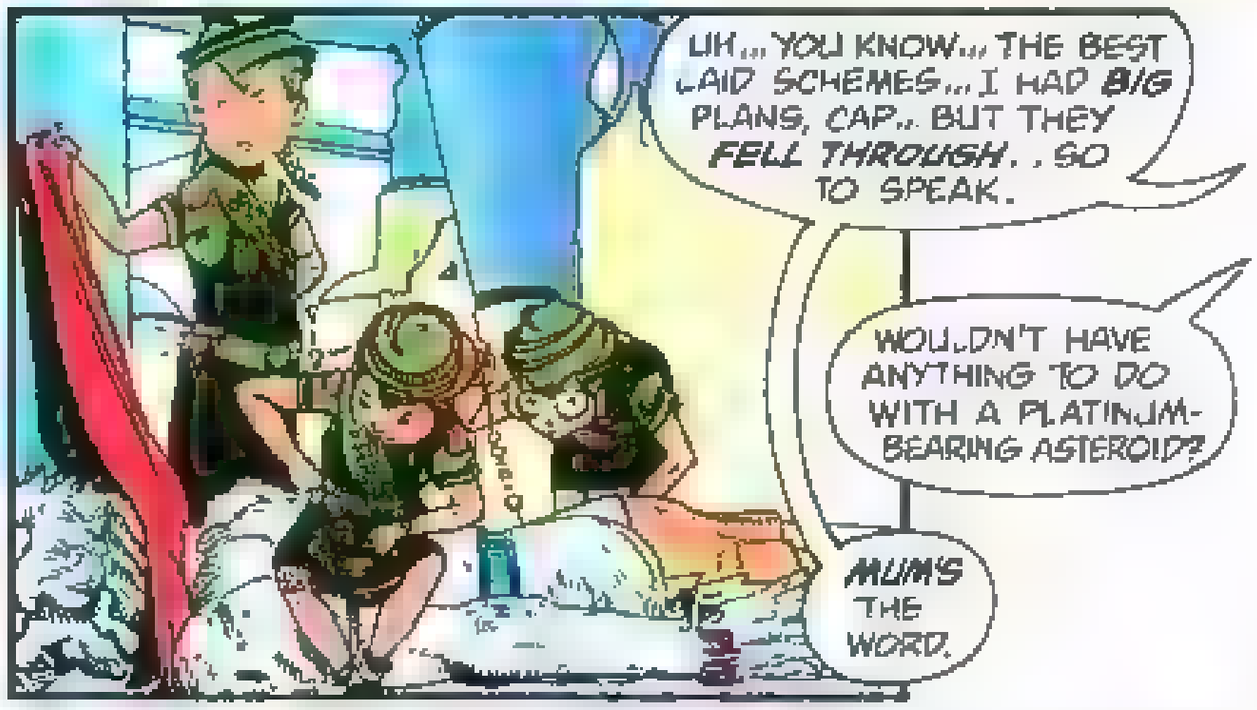

AMSCRAY, BRATS... I GOT YOUR NUMBER, AN' YOU'RE BE N' DISCONNECTED!
Norris Rex WAX MUSEUM EMPORIUM

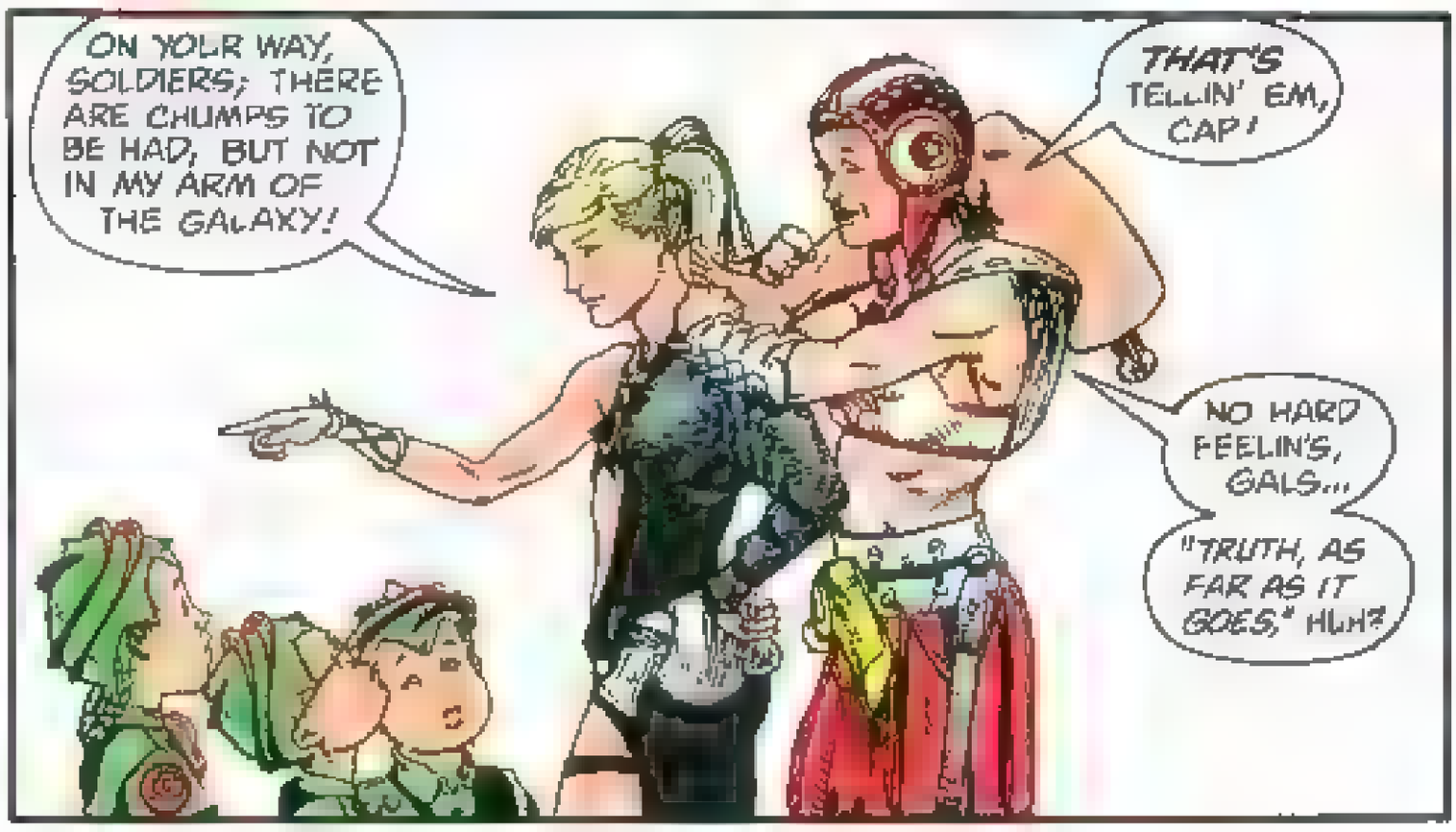


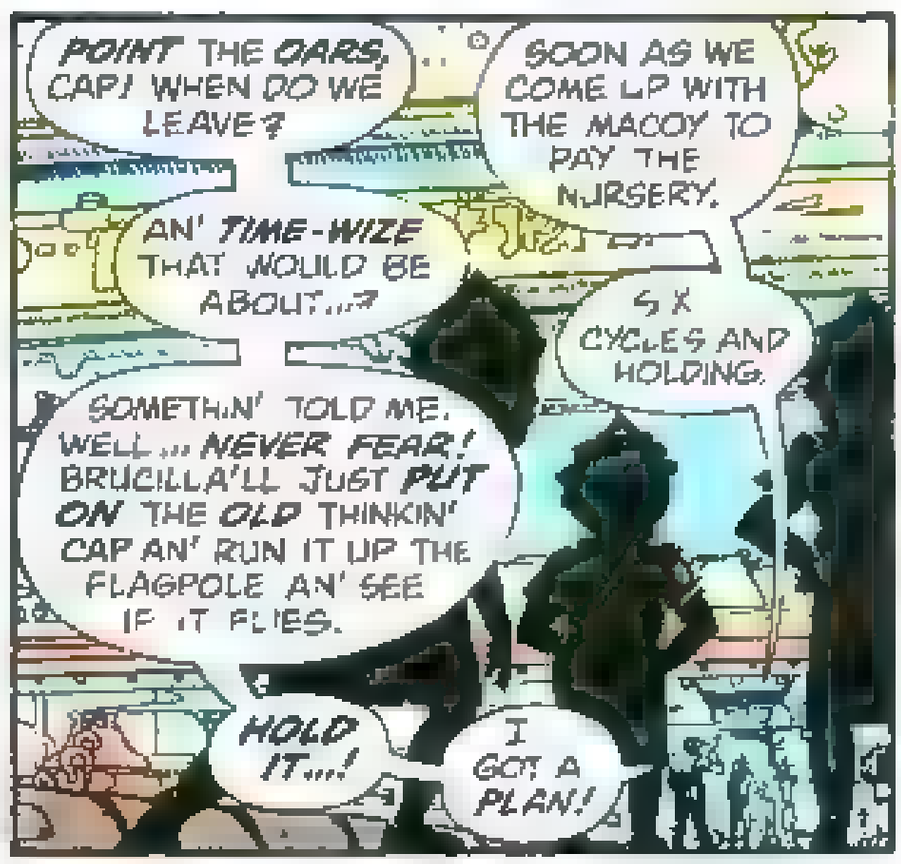
HEADS UP!


PUT!
Norris Rex WAX MUSEUM EMPORIUM


I THINK I SAID VAMOOSE!
HOLD IT, BRL...
WHAT BUSINESS BROUGHT YOU TO THIS GLITZ BIN...OTHER THAN THE OBVIOUS?


UH... YOU KNOW... THE BEST LAID SCHEMES... I HAD BIG PLANS, CAP.. BUT THEY FELL THROUGH.. SO TO SPEAK.
WOULDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH A PLATINUM-BEARING ASTEROID?
MUM'S THE WORD.


ON YOUR WAY, SOLDIERS; THERE ARE CHUMPS TO BE HAD, BUT NOT IN MY ARM OF THE GALAXY!
THAT'S TELLIN' EM, CAP!
NO HARD FEELIN'S, GALS...
"TRUTH, AS FAR AS IT GOES," HUH?


POINT THE OARS, CAP! WHEN DO WE LEAVE?
SOON AS WE COME UP WITH THE MACOY TO PAY THE NURSERY.
AN' TIME-WISE THAT WOULD BE ABOUT...?
SIX CYCLES AND HOLDING.
SOMETHIN' TOLD ME. WELL... NEVER FEAR! BRUCILLA'LL JUST PUT ON THE OLD THINKIN' CAP AN' RUN IT UP THE FLAGPOLE AN' SEE IF IT FLIES.
HOLD IT...!
I GOT A PLAN!

THE PLAN

THIS IS NOT *EXACTLY* THE PLAN I HAD IN MIND, CAP

HOLD YOUR GROUND, BRU. IT'S TOUGHER WITH A MOVING TARGET.

ONE R'BEC, PARTNER...

...A SHORT SNORT..

...STRAIGHTENS THE AIM...

ARE YOU *SURE* ABOUT THIS, CAP?

GULK!

TRUST ME.

SPAK

I GOT A BETTER IDEA!

SHOOT!

PRECISELY WHAT I HAD IN MIND! *GUIDES!*

SNAP TO!

THIS IS BRUCILLA *THE MUSCLE,* HAWK CLASS *GUIDE* SPEAKIN' -AN I *KNOW* YOU'RE SKULKIN' IN THE VICINITY *SOME*WHERE!

ON THE *ZIP!*

I'M TALKIN' *RECRUITS!*

WING-LEADER GLYNDE, REPORTING FOR DUTY! IF YOU'RE *THE* BRU THE M, AND I THINK I SPEAK FOR THE W NG...

...WE'D L KE A PIECE OF THE ACTION!

I'M TALKIN *RAFFLE, GALS... CHURCH BAZAAR...*

HERE'S THE PLAN...

THE PLAN

?

SEE IT NOW! ONLY A GLA-CRED T' COULD BE YOUR LAST CHANCE!

STAND BACK, ALLA YA!

GIMME SOME ELBOW ROOM OR END UP WITH DEEP-FRIED RETINAS, TAKE YOUR PICK!

...EAST EXIT?

YOU SLOBS ARE ABOUT TO WITNESS A FASCINATIN' DISPLAY OF SKILL AND PRECISION, SO GET READY AND HOLD TIGHT TO YOUR TAILS, AN' YA WON'T LOSE 'EM.

COUNT 'EM!

STAND READY!

TAKE YOUR AIM!

BLAST ASS!

THIS WAY, CAP! EAST EXIT!

HO... THE TAKE!

WORRY NOT... WE GOT IT!

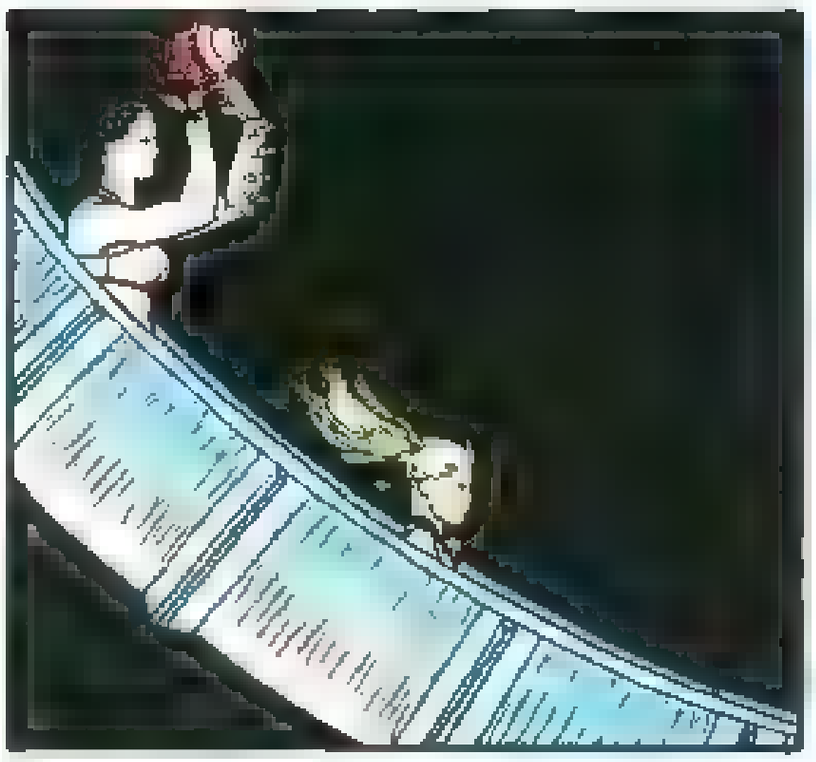
SHIT! THE SKAATZ!

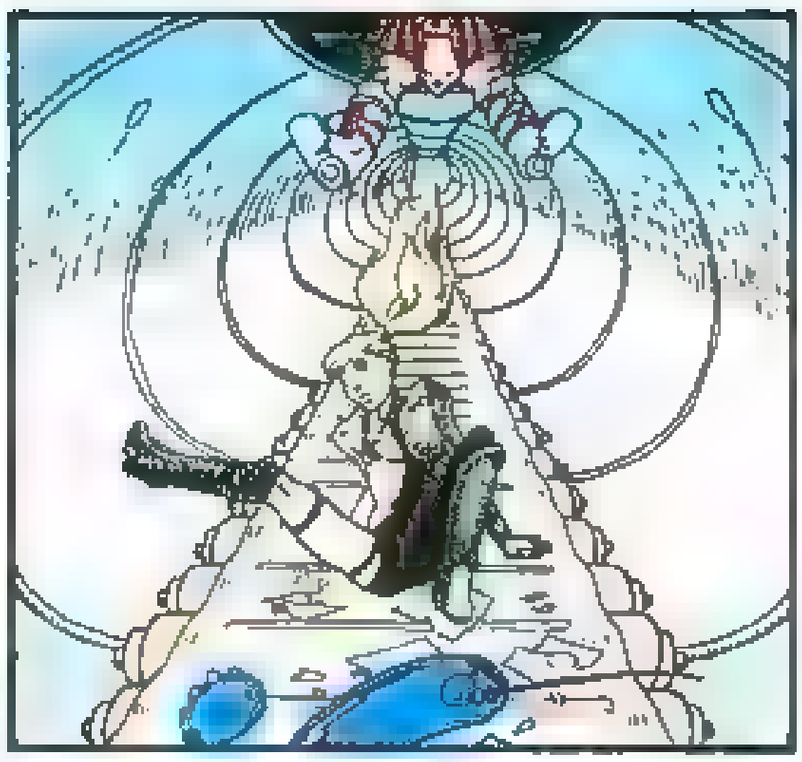
NOT THAT DOOR!

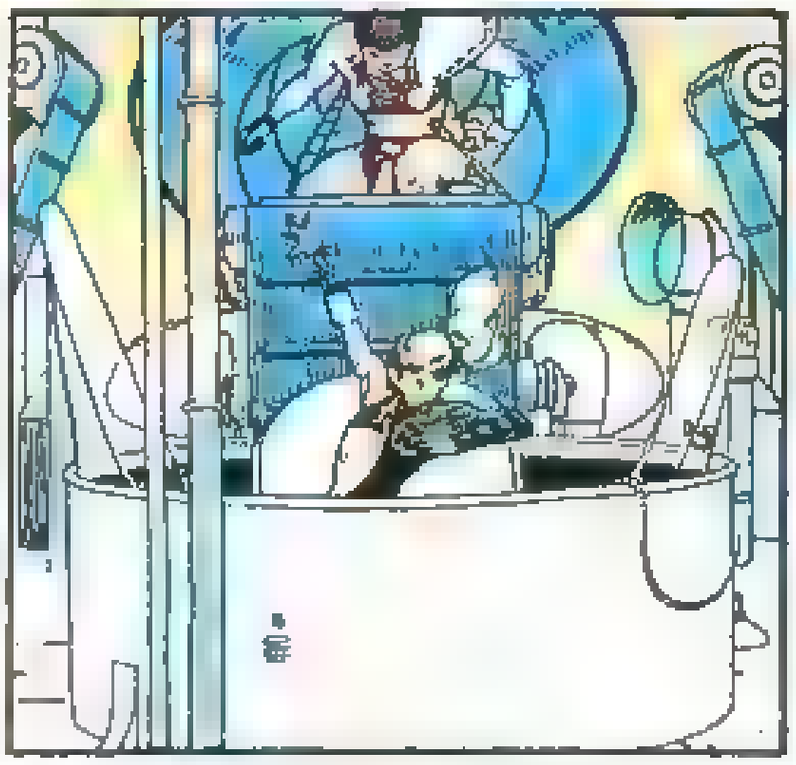
WHAT TH--?

BRU! DOWN THE HATCH!

HUH?
OH!
PM

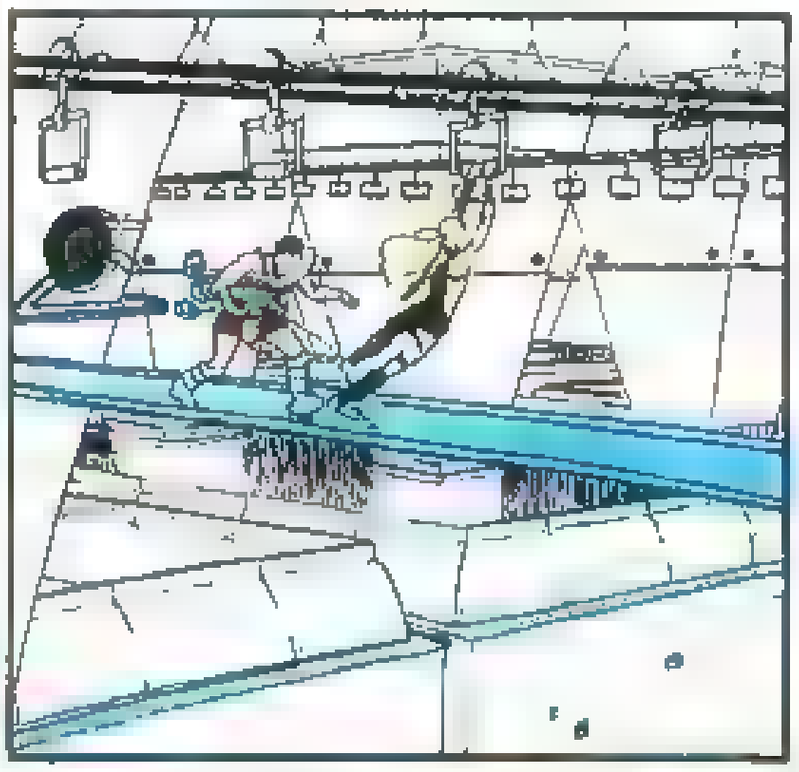


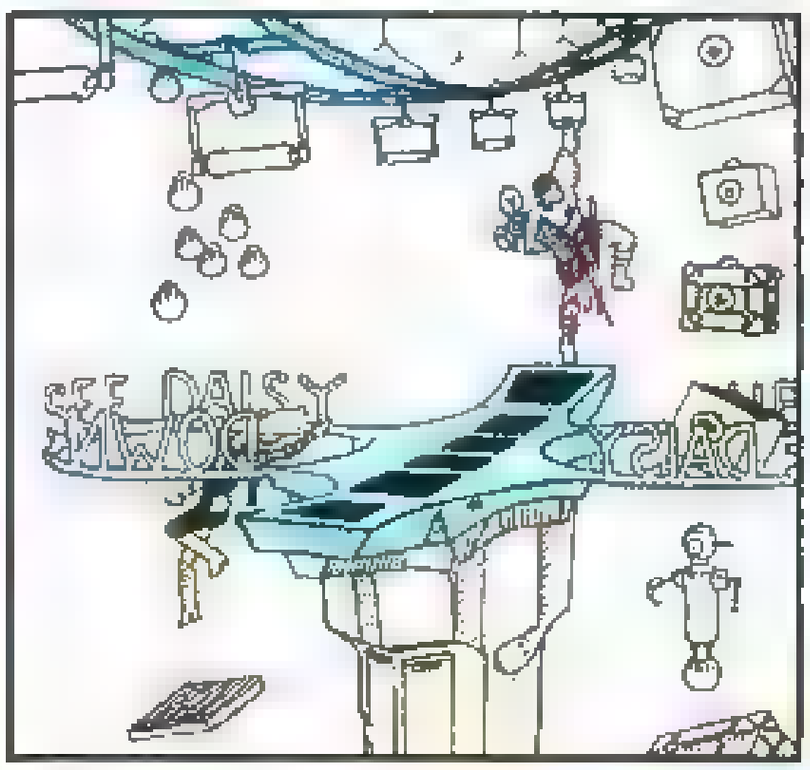


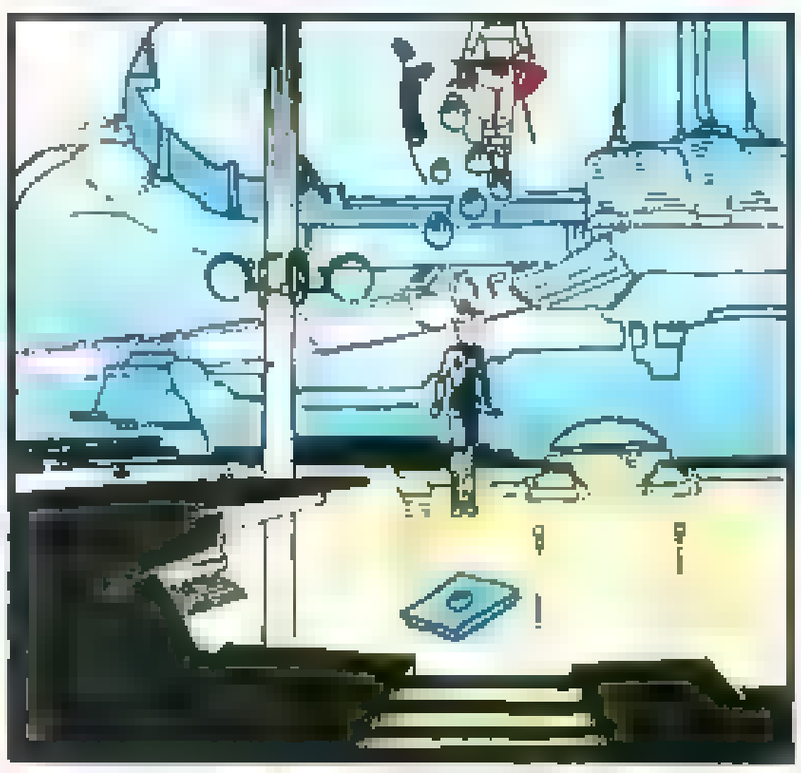


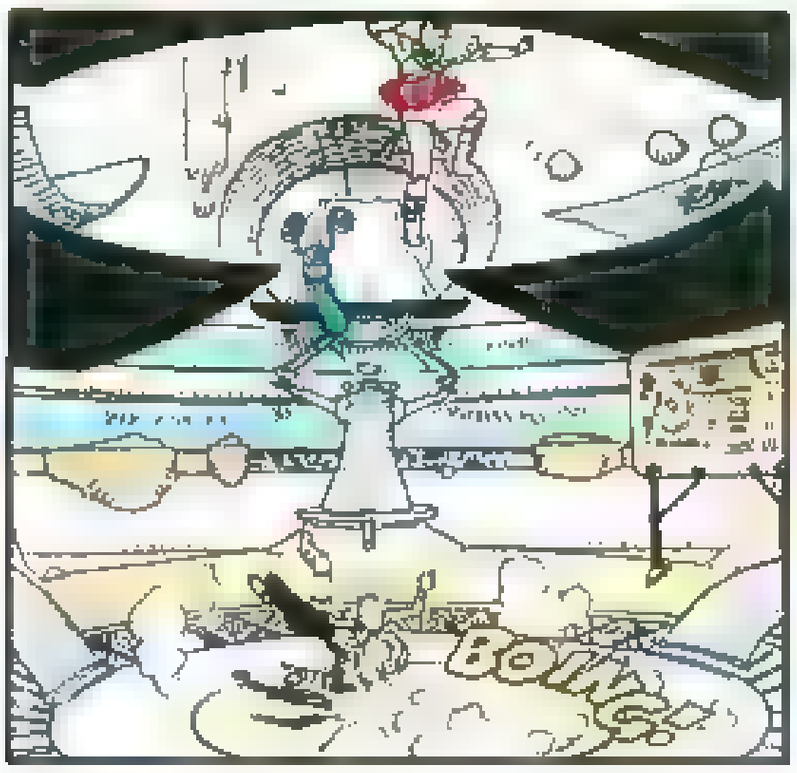
WOOP
OOF!
OW
YIV
BUMP
CLATTER
PING
TAP-T

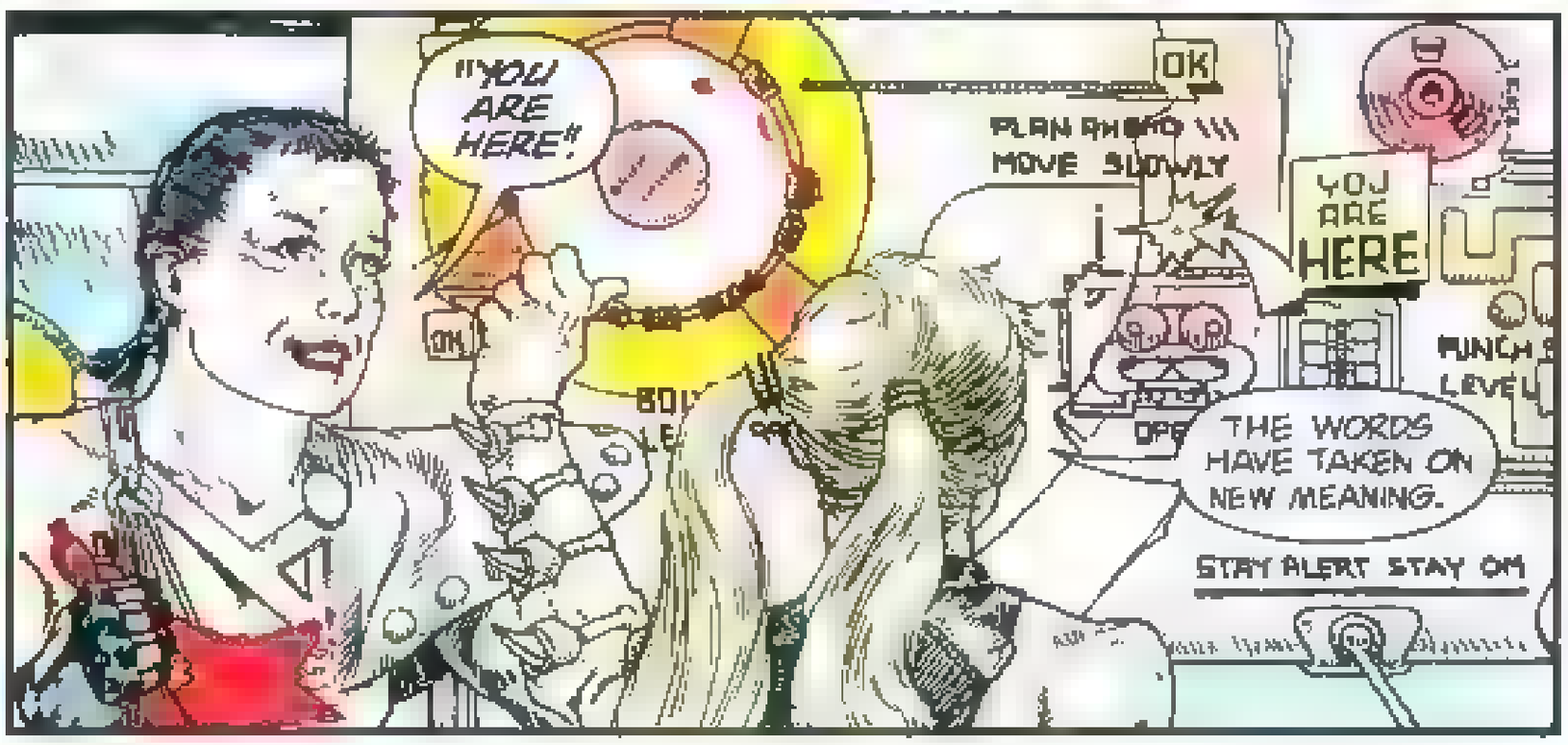
SHIT
@W
BONK
P-A-TAP
STUB




SEE DAISY
SWOOP
CRAWL




BOING


"YOU ARE HERE!"
OK
PLAN PHASE !!!
MOVE SLOWLY
YOU ARE HERE
THE WORDS HAVE TAKEN ON NEW MEANING.
STAY ALERT STAY OM

NOTH'N' LIKE COOL CREDITS TWIXT TH'OLE BAZOOMS!

WE COULDN'A MADE ENOUGH.

GUIDES GOT TH' LIGHTEST FINGERS IN TH' GALAXY.

WHAT!!!

TRUTH AS FAR AS IT GOES?

SOME HEAP, CAP!

"And know when evil winks and sighs,
And to thy breast dost fly to cling,
When thou wouldst't heed the siren's cries,
Beware the beat of Harpy's wings!"

YOU KNOW, CAP... I THINK THIS IS THE BEGINNING OF A BEAUTIFUL F—

RIGHT.

MAMMYGRAM-™
(CONT. FROM PRIOR TOO-UNIT)
SUBJECT GROUP AGAIN ON BLUE HEAVEN. GUIDES ENGAGED IN S.C.A.M. STAGE FINI: DIVEE THE SWAG. REAL McCOY!

GUIDES PROCEED DOWN...

HOLY COW!

GUIDES PROCEED DOWN...

PRIORITY OVERRIDE! REQUEST AUDIENCE!

SQUEEEEEE!!

DO YOU HAVE *ANY* IDEA WHAT *TIME* IT IS HERE?

AN EROTICA ANN DROID... MINT CONDITION... SEEMINGLY INVOLVED IN THE GUIDES' S.C.A.M....

FORGET THE GUIDES! GRAB THE DROID!

IT'S IMPORTANT!!!

THANKS FOR COMING, MAMA. LET ME BORROW YOUR HANKIE.

TRUEHEART

KLIK!

THAT'S RIGHT...THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT WHO DELIVERED YOUR DEAR, BRAVE JESERIT INTO DEATH'S DARK EMBRACE ...REC 97.

...YES, ON REC 97...THE NANCONTH FAMILY...VENGEANCE...THE YOUNG BRIGADER *YOU* SET UP...AND HOW *IS* YOUR SON...

...THE ONE THAT HANDED WEATHERAL YOUR VITALS RESTING ON A BED OF *STANDARD CREDITS*...UH-HUH...97. JUST THOUGHT YOU'D LIKE TO KNOW...

...A TIP...THE TWO FEMFIGHTERS WHO "BLEW" HEAVEN AND THE BOTTOM OUT OF PLATINUM...IN THE NURSERY... SOON TO BLOW SKY HIGH...

...THIS SHOULD TICKLE THE OLE "*FAMILY*" JEWELS...SPOTTED AN *ANNIE* IN MINT CONDITION! IN THE COMPANY OF A SAILOR...ONE BREAST... BELT HIGH...SCAR...REC 97.

...HAVE YOU HUGGED YOUR DROID TODAY? FIND GALATIA 9 AND THAT *MOTOR-MOUTHED* MINER... "*NURSING*" THEIR BIRDIE...

...LADY SANDANKO...A MESSAGE FOR PRIME MINISTER GLORIANNA... "TWO OF HER KITTENS HAVE LOST THEIR--"

I'LL TAKE THAT.

SO...INDIRA LUCREZIA RONNIE LEE ELLIS BAJAR... WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS IS, *AMATEUR NIGHT?*

NOW WE'RE IN FOR IT.

134 A.G.

WHADDYA MEAN "WE", PALEFACE?

"WHAT THE SIREN SINGS"

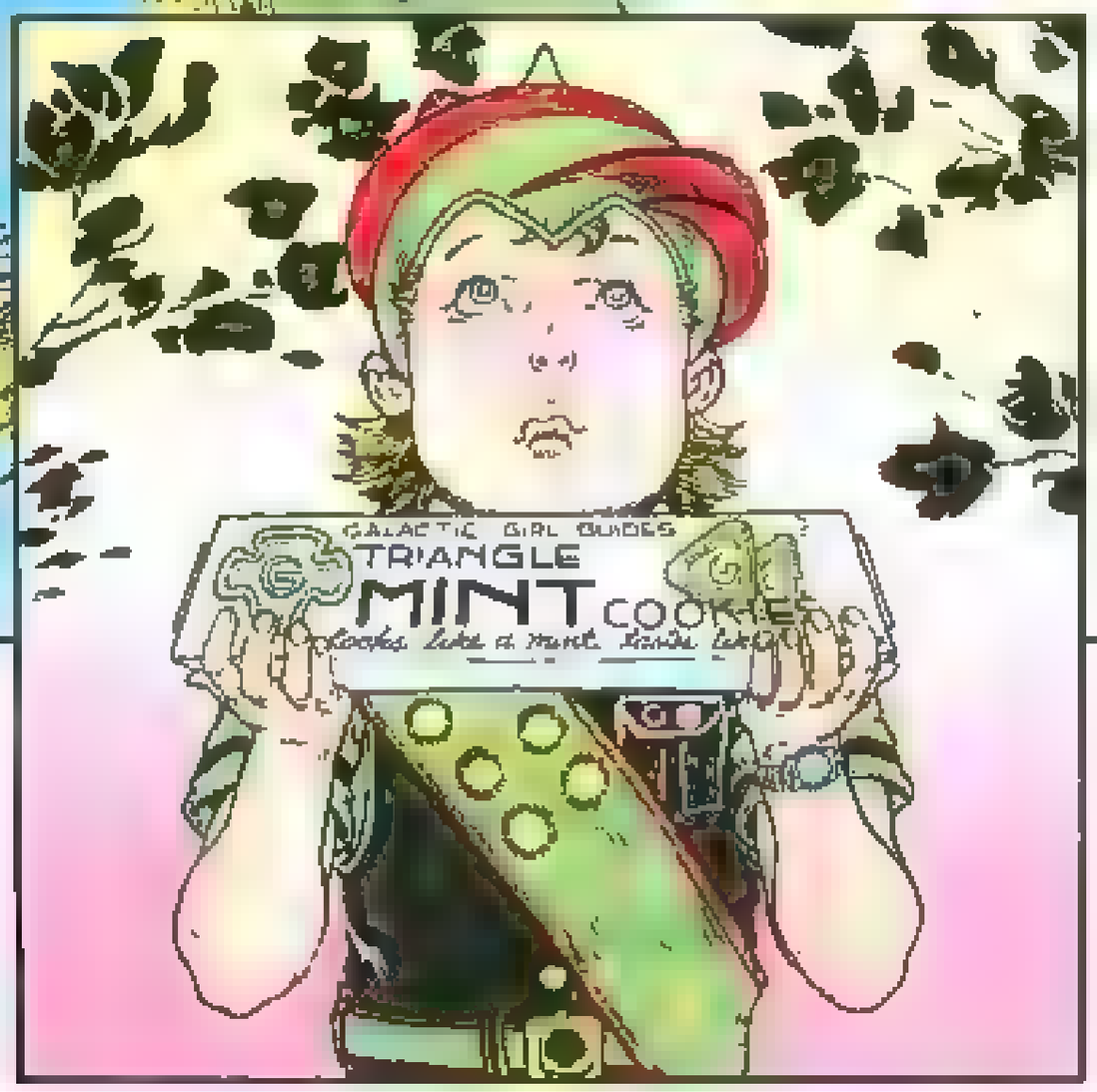
CYCLE 140
ANARCHERA

CLUB NEBB™
ON THE PLANET
HYDRANGEA

- MEMBERS ONLY
- NO RIFF-RAFF

"O JOY OF CREATION, TO BE!
O RAPTURE, TO FLY AND BE FREE!
BE THE BATTLE LOST OR WON,
THOUGH IT'S SMOKE SHALL HIDE THE SUN,
I SHALL FIND MY LOVE--THE ONE BORN FOR ME."
--"WHAT THE BULLET SANG" BRET HARTE

©



ALLUSION: AN INDIRECT REFERENCE. A PLAYING OR SPORTING WITH

ILLUSION: A FALSE PERCEPTION.

·The·End...?·

THE STARSTRUCK GLOSSARY

Americadian Space Brigade, The
The military arm of Amercadia. Shortly after the Unification of Sovereign Townships ended the only longish period of peace in Old Terran History, the associated governments of the United States and Canada (now Amercadia) began to wonder what THEY were up to. All the little home guards were made into one big HOME GUARD. Its chief function was to protect Amercadia from EVERYBODY IN THE WORLD. When NOBODY came, Amercadia began to have bigger worries. If THEY weren't coming from the other side of the globe, there was a good chance THEY were coming from OUT THERE. Amercadia mobilized a great space fleet. Brave lads and lasses were "recruited" into the new Amercadian Space Brigade and sent OUT THERE. Their chief function was to protect Amercadia from EVERYBODY. Once they got OUT THERE, they discovered that no one had even the slightest interest in Amercadia. Having been robbed of their reason d'etre, they pondered the alternatives. They adapted. Their chief function became PRESERVE AND SUSTAIN THE BRIGADE. The Brigade prospered and grew, trading its military might to an ally HERE for...oh let's say Borinyum Krystals...becoming involved in a small conflict THERE and being repaid by an OH-SO-GRATEFUL government with a tiny shipment of monopoles. Amercadia ITSELF became less and less a real place and more and more an Ideal of the Brigade. AMERICADIA's chief function became FEED THE BRIGADE.

ArcheOrganaApocolypsia
By all accounts, the worst play ever produced, ArcheOrgana-Apocolypsia traces the humanoid race from its humble beginnings, to its predicted destruction (see Brand New Testament, The) Each performance lasted a full nargon and was presented in three acts: The Creation, The Duration, The Devastation. The play was written by Brother Anthony Quantis, playboy theologian and ex-member of the Brothers of the Dangling Zed, a heretical Christo-Zedian sect. It was re-written and staged by well known director, Sambo Thrace-Smythe. In the words of Onus Wren, renowned theatre critic, "A futile exercise in intellectual autoeroticism. Better by far had he (Thrace-Smythe) inserted a trisone injectible into his left ear."

ArcheOrganaApocolypsia resulted in the financial devastation of anyone even slightly involved with the production and, less directly, the deaths of the Troikani actors, Personus/Ex/Mahkina and the well known director, Sambo Thrace-Smythe.

Cosmic Veil, Cloistered Order of the
Of the myriad religions in the known Universe, the Cloistered Order of the Cosmic Veil is the only one with no splinter factions, hence, it is easily definable by its own tenets which are as follows: 1) The Mother is Paradox; Ever Present and Never There when you need HER, 2) Non-Participation is the better part of Action, 3) If the Pond is Illusion, then what are the Ripples? 4) All Things come to She who Waits...and waits...and waits ...5) Confuse Karma; Stand quite still and think of Nothing. The cloisters, which are scattered about the more densely populated regions, are round in shape, small in size, and packed full to union with the Void...or so they say. Certain socioarcheologists have pointed to the similarities between the tenets of the Cosmic Veil and the tenets of the Daughters of the Drowning Isis, a fictional religion introduced in the best selling *Mind Spiders from the Planet Xenon*, by the Hugo Award winning author, Ronnie Lee Ellis.

Galactic Girl Guides
On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to the Mother and to my Universe, to help other Girl Guides whenever doing so does not conflict with my own best interest, and to obey, if possible, the Girl Guide Law—Galactic Girl Guide Pledge.

An organization dedicated to the schooling of young girls in survival tactics on a galactic scale, the

THE GLOSSARY

GALATIA 9

Galactic Girl Guides trace their roots to Pre-Unification Amercadia. They began as the Junior Girl Guard, a branch of the Home Guard of the Sovereign Township Kansas. The Girl Guard served as a training ground for future Kansan patriots (see: Space Rangers) and, according to the Official Galactic Girl Guide Handbook, was "probably okay if you fancy being bullet bait for a bunch of blowhard bigshots who could care less if you got your tail kicked forty ways from Sunday." The Guard was immensely popular and soon spread to other Sovereign Townships in what was soon to become Amercadia. Their popularity dwindled during The Unification and the nationalization of the HOME GUARD. This was due, in part, to a lack of funding and to the fact that most of the J.G.G.'s leadership had been drafted into the new Amercadian HOME GUARD. Their common sense outlook and grassroots ideals remained close to the hearts of Amercadians, however, and during the early Expansion, they resurfaced. They broke their ties with what had been the HOME GUARD and was now the Amercadian Space Brigade and advertised themselves as a school-of-hard-knocks that prepared young girls to cut the mustard in a tough galaxy "It's a TOUGH GALAXY..." read the recruiting posters, "...but SOMEBODY'S gottta live in it. It might as well be YOU!" And from the Official Galactic Girl Guide Handbook, "A Girl Guide is wary, cunning, clever, assertive, flexible, patient, inventive, and brave but not stupidly so." The Guides belonged to a small group or "wing" and were classified by age as Chickadees, Jaybirds, Blackbirds, and Senior Guides or Voidettes. The coveted title Hawk Class Guide was an earned only position.

Today's Guides are part of a Galaxy-wide net of 5,300,487 wings. The Guides are very loosely connected to each other through the 3G Mobile Galactic Headquarters and Campground. They work their way up in the ranks by acquiring merit badges. Some examples are: The Do-Yo-Stuff badge, awarded for escaping punishment when caught in the act. This badge is sometimes accompanied by the "Silver Tongued Sister" badge if the guide manages to turn the situation entirely around in her favor so that she escapes with honor and awards. There are shark badges (card, pool, dark-bone-mark), a stowaway badge, and the highly prized "Sign of the Nova" badge which is awarded for deceiving the Girl Guide staff into awarding you at least 52 badges you haven't earned. This very useful education has created a great demand for guide-trained women. They make terrific corporate spies, professional gamblers, and hostess bouncers at some of the rougher leisure spots. Finally, the spirit of the Galactic Girl Guides is summed up in their motto: "TRUTH AS FAR AS IT GOES."

Kublacaine

An ego-enhancing drug that takes hold of a normal (or sub-normal) ego, foundering in the umbra of rational thought, id-ridden, fumbling, and unaware of it or idself, and tránsforms it into a forged titanium fortress housing a crystalline consciousness just dripping with highlights and bristling with juicily dangerous sharp edges. The subject remains calm, outwardly, while within burgeons a bigger and Oh-So-Very-Calmer calm...a waveless calm...a serene reposeful, halcyonian calm...a calm based on the sudden and irrefutable knowledge that one is really quite a great guy...a prince in fact ...Nay! A Lord! A GREAT LORD, STARK AND TERRIBLE, WHOSE NAME OR INTIMATION OF HIS NAME CONJURES OVERAWE AND SOLEMN VENERATION IN EACH MERE AND MORTAL CONSCIOUSNESS WITHIN THE VAST BREADTH OF ONE'S OMNISCIENT GAZE! FAINT HEARTS QUAIL! ALL BOW...NAY, GENUFLECT BEFORE THE ALL KNOWING, ALL SEEING, ALL BEING BEING!

Outwardly, as we've stated, one remains calm. One tipples a beverage, disturbs the nap of the rug with a languorous toe, flicks a speck of mortal coil from one's

THE GLOSSARY

cuff, sighs, stifles a well-deserved yawn of nascent ennui while one's golden thoughts caress the dulcifluous knowledge that one's oafish acquaintances, ne'er-do-well relatives, interfering in-laws, insensible siblings, impaired parents, gross supplicants and servile hangers on, the family dog and the whole fam damnily of humanoid-kind, along with their wives, husbands, sisters, cousins, clones, droids, pets and parasites and the countless rat-like embryos of the cosmos at large and their crawling, toady alien counterparts exist ONLY AT ONE'S WHIM...craving only a nod...a wink...a kick...to feel elevated for but an instant above the meaningless morass of their own near-lives. Kublacaine is the pinnacle, head-wise.

Needless to say, it comes in mighty handy on an intersteller jaunt of any great distance. Puts it all in its proper perspective.

Neutral Zones

During the Expansionist Era, the first Neutral Zone was declared shortly after two Amercadian Scouts were lost in the vicinity of Barnards Star. The last recorded communication from the ship (The Beaver) still echoes echoes echoes down the hollow arm of Father Time.

Rongschilde: Sure is quiet...?

Jones: Yeah...too quiet.

By the early days of IER, any slice, hunk, wedge, or space of space deemed responsible for three verified disappearances of sentient beings became a lawfully designated Neutral Zone. Verification Recordings, Neutral Zone 8: 1) "It's AMAZING! IT'S FANTASTIC!!! IT'S...IT'S..." (static). 2) "I see a...I see...I..." (static). 3) "These reports musta been fakes. This place is as safe as a..." (static). As the concept of Neutral Zones caught on, some beings found it convenient to augment the ruling to fit other situations. Areas of dispute plagued by border wars (where there was no real profit motive) soon became Neutral Zones, saving wear and tear on the Borderees. This ruling was enforced by Expansionist and later IER Authorities in an effort to quiet troubled trade areas. Toward the end of the Stagnation, PAHM Bajar began an experiment using Vercadian Protector Androids to defend the Zones. During the early Anarchera cycles (when, for all practical purposes there WERE NO authorities), the incredibly dangerous, incredibly expensive Vercadian Protector Androids became the chief means of enforcing Neutral Zones. If you were rich enough to have a droid, you could have a Zone.

Thrace-Smythe, Sambo

Well-known director famous for producing very long works with very long names and of a quasi-religious nature. Little is known of his early life. He left the Boones Dock Academy of Speech and Drama in AE 23 after having lost his scholarship to an unknown performance artist. With the aid of an obsolete Miz-Fix-it droid (see: Handy-Andi) and a Thia-line Drone, he captured a Rootersnoos Beacon in the Noh Zone and began broadcasting the cult classic radio series, "WHY?" "WHY?!!!" the voice echoed electronically down the back streets of the galaxy, "...OR BLOWN FROM THE ASS OF GOD! The continuing adventures of Perplexus Eqs Youth! (dramatic music) Journey with me to the thrilling daze of yestercycle, when magic was real and every new beginning had a new name. (more dramatic music) My name? (ditto) Just call me...(echo effect) A CRY IN THE NOTHINGNESS!!!" By the time Rootersnoos discovered what was going on and sent someone to check it out, the void-space surrounding the beacon was packed out to 58 sparlons with the ships and stellarcopters of loyal fans that looked, from a distance,like a school of Aguatunesian Tuna. "WHY" was syndicated, Thrace-Smythe, an overunit success. Between AE 29 and 92, he would write, produce, and direct more that 50 plays including PARAPLEGIA, METAMORPHICA, METAPHORIA, and the enormously successful AERIOPAGITICA. Between Cycles 93 and 120 he became disillusioned and depressed and did his famous "blue period" work, the eternally

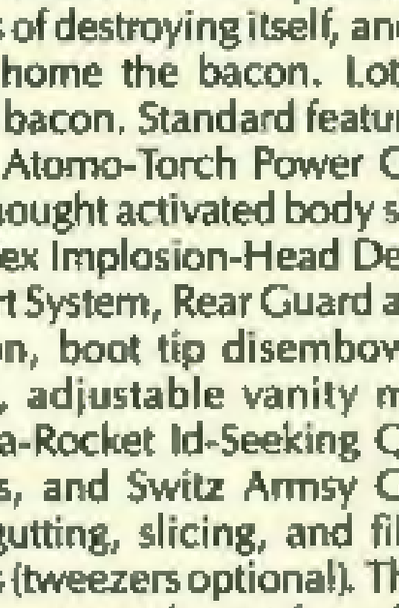
BRUCILLA AS A KRABIAN SLAVE

THE GLOSSARY

running soap opera, CYCLES INFINITUM and the silly but financially rewarding musical, LET GO AND LET GOD! In Cycle 128, Thrace-Smythe staged what was, by all accounts, the worst play ever produced ... ARCHEORGANAAPOCOLYPSIA. Due to the public humiliation and the outcry at the ritual deaths of the Troikani actors Personus/Ex/Mahkina, Thrace-Smythe went underground for 9 cycles and emerged in AE 137 as a director of lasarounds. He directed 13 lasarounds and then disappeared mysteriously at the opening of his 14th, PHOENIXFLOWEROTICA, (based on Lotti Bo Sugar's best selling autobiography, HOW I INADVERTENTLY STUMBLED INTO A SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH AND WAS BLINDED.) He was never seen again. One explanation of his disappearance can be found in Kettle Black's controversial play, THE PERSECUTION AND ASSASSINATION OF SAMBO THRACESMYTHE AS PERFORMED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE GUERNICAN ART SQUAD UNDER THE DIRECTION OF TERONIA TA or THRACE-SMYTHE/TA. During the course of the play, Black (playing herself) recreates the scene in which she and two other members of the squad capture Thrace-Smythe. He is murdered horribly and his emotional essence, preserved at the last mill-ribec of his life, is bottled by "BRUSH AND BLASTER" (the Art Squad's mercenary division) and sold as their famous "EMOTIONAL COLORS #3, ANGST & AGONY." Emotional colors are mixed with any pigment and add to a finished painting a palpable aura of feeling.

Troikani
The people of Troika (both singular and plural). A Troikani has an extremely flexible persona, a very shallow id, and almost NO sense of self. It takes the hearts, minds, and souls of AT LEAST three Troikani to make even ONE respectable psyche. Even so...they can quickly adapt to the most extreme environment, melt quietly into the strangest of cultures, and mimic ANYTHING, creature or concept, in the known universe. They make excellent actors. When left alone, without the company of others of its species, a Troikani will have one of three reactions: 1) It will pine away and die, 2) It will run through its entire repertoire of roles (these collected over a lifetime) at a speed incredible to behold until dead from exhaustion, 3) It will call the actors' union every marbec on the marbec to complain about *everything* in the known universe until the union sends someone to put it out of its misery.

Vercadian Protector Android
The ony android culture (or batch) capable of premeditated assault on a sentient being...the Cyberphobe's nightmare. They are incredibly expensive and incredibly dangerous. Vercadian Protector Androids were built in the early Cycles of IER-CO by the Vercadian Andromedicones in an effort to 1) fulfill their programming by providing a nearly indestructible protector for its human owners, 2) to "scratch an old itch" by providing humankind with yet another means of destroying itself, and 3) to bring home the bacon. Lots and lots of bacon. Standard features include Atomo-Torch Power Gauntlets, thought activated body shield, Pec-Flex Implosion-Head Destructo-Dart System, Rear Guard atomic cannon, boot tip disemboweling horns, adjustable vanity mirror, Chakra-Rocket Id-Seeking Quasar Bullets, and Switz Armsy Guards with gutting, slicing, and filleting knives (tweezers optional). The two best known and most feared of all Vercadian Protector Androids were Veep 7, the warrior-poet, and 785, the gold-plated bodyguard of the Mayor of Casterbridge. An old children's tale tells of Veep 7, the masterless droid, that he was once stared down by a chinchilla from the Yndokrin Mining Belts and so lost his arm guard.



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